

CULTURAL HEGEMONIC ANALYSIS: A STUDY OF THE SELECTED WORKS OF INDIAN ENGLISH WRITERS

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By

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DECLARATION

I, hereby declare that the presented work in the thesis entitled “**Cultural Hegemonic Analysis: A Study of the Selected Works of Indian English Writers**” in fulfilment of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** is the outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of **Dr. Richa Arora**, working as **Associate Professor** in the **Department of English** of **Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India**. In keeping with the general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgments have been made whenever work described here has been based on the findings of other investigators. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph.D. thesis entitled “**Cultural Hegemonic Analysis: A Study of the Selected Works of Indian English Writers**” submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in the Department of English, is a research work carried out by **Rajdeep Guha, 41800399**, is bonafide record of his/her original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.



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Cultural Hegemonic Analysis: A Study of the Selected Works of Indian English Writers

Abstract: The thesis examines six novels written by Indian English writers Mahasweta Devi, Arundhati Roy, V.S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri and Neel Mukherjee. The respective novels are *Mother of 1084*, *The God of Small Things*, *Magic Seeds*, *The Inheritance of Loss*, *The Lowland* and *The Lives of Others*. The research objectives of the thesis are as follows:

- To trace the historical roots and discuss literary contributions of the selected writers
- To apply Antonio Gramsci's concept of Cultural Hegemony on the select works
- To examine the issues of 'The People' and related 'Common Sense' based on textual study
- To analyse the struggle of the marginalised community to defeat the repressive power of the dominant group

The thesis has adopted Antonio Gramsci's theory of Cultural Hegemony as the theoretical framework. The methodology adopted by the researcher is qualitative in nature. Through textual analysis, the researcher has examined the six novels as well as Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony. The thesis takes into account the lives of the six authors and analyses how the events in their own lives have inspired them to write their respective novels.

The six novels have one thing in common. They have incorporated a resistance and identity movement that is present throughout the plot. The movement affects the family dynamics of the characters and helps to highlight the cultural and social contexts of the contemporary age. Having said that, it can be seen that all the novels show instances of cultural

hegemony perpetrated by a certain dominant social group. The thesis analyses the resistance movements and finds out how the novelists have used them to carry forward the plot. The study of the selected works shows the negative implication of cultural hegemony on the social space and individuals. While investigating the selected works, it is found that there is a strong correlation between the marginalisation of the characters and the hegemonic influences committed by state agencies and majoritarian groups. The research further finds that the resistance movements are often sabotaged by their own cadres thereby, making the goals of the movements futile. During the research, it is found that the six selected novels deal with marginalisation and how the characters negotiate the various contours of cultural beliefs.

In the thesis, the researcher has investigated the social as well as the historical contexts that have contributed to the social and cultural marginalisation. Furthermore, the inter-generational differences are also important because the histories of the characters are different. The psychological and emotional contours of the characters in the novels are affected by hegemonic agencies and this, in turn, has an impact on the family relationships.

One of the key findings in the thesis is that marginalisation happens in the micro and macro social spaces. Family as a social space is often the site for conflicts. Thus, the family dynamics reflect the contemporary social scenario depicted in the novels. The social inequality happening in the outside world can be seen within family spaces as well. Therefore, all the novels can be considered to be social documents. The thesis brings to light the different facets of hegemony and how hegemonic agencies work in multiple ways. A victim of hegemonic repression might become a perpetrator of hegemony. During the course of the discussion, the textual analysis of the novels unravels the cultural interplay within the socio-political platforms.

The desire of the characters to have a better life and thus, their intention to migrate to some other country or an alternate space has been examined in detail in the thesis.

The researcher believes that the social relevance of the thesis is tremendous. The thesis will help policymakers to determine policies addressing the different resistance and social movements. Furthermore, the thesis helps in the comprehension of cultures. This is important in today's pluralistic age which is characterised by the intermingling of various cultural strata and the presence of individuals who are moulded by multi-cultural thoughts and patterns. The thesis should help individuals frame policies of inclusion that will help people living on the margins enter the social mainstream.

Human relationships change because of hegemony and it is important that we recognise the positioning of an individual concerning the social and cultural contexts. It is said that literature is a mirror of life and so, the study of the selected novels offers a glimpse into the thoughts and perceptions of individuals as well as society as a whole. The research investigates the repressive power of the dominant group and finds out how the dominant group looks at issues of 'The People' and 'Common Sense'.

The present research also points to the dangers of looking at social and political events from the perspective of binaries. An egalitarian society must be encouraged where people from all social groups and sections are included. The relevance of the present research lies in the fact that it has highlighted the dangers of cultural hegemony within a social space. Therefore, it is important to appreciate the relativity and subjectivity of cultural contexts within which individuals live and function.

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It is often said that a Ph.D. is a marathon and during this roller-coaster ride, the researcher comes across many a person who had been a part of this research journey. I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has been a part of this long, fruitful journey.

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Introduction

The period of Modernism in English literature extends from the 1900s to the 1950s. It is often said that Modernism is an offshoot of industrialisation and the post-World War scenario. After the two World Wars that shook the entire world, people began to question whether humanity could survive at all. Thus, a trend began to emerge in literature where writers began to introspect into inner self and consciousness. The literature of this period was no longer marked by romanticism or the utilitarian philosophy of the Victorian period.

Another trait that appeared on the world stage after World War II was the advent of Capitalism. This emerging Capitalism slowly gave birth to the loneliness of human beings. Furthermore, the so-called welfare state also came into being which further relegated the ordinary man into a state of non-entity. A very representative poem of this period is *The Unknown Citizen* by W.H. Auden which shows the namelessness of the modern man's existence. Naturally, to overcome this existential crisis, there was a tendency among Modernist writers to use the first-person narrative in their works. Talking of narrative style, one of the things that has to be noted in Modernist literature is the different writing styles adopted by the different writers. Some used the free verse while others preferred the stream-of-consciousness technique of narration. This also reflected the state of disarray in the then contemporary society.

One of the seminal works of the Modern Period is *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot where Eliot aspires for a spiritually fertile world among an otherwise barren and senile atmosphere. Another seminal work *Ulysses* by James Joyce discusses the events of one day in the lives of the three Dubliners. The novel is marked by a narrative style that is full of fragments of thought

that embody the characters' thought processes. The famous writers of this period included names such as T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Joseph Conrad, Samuel Beckett, D.H. Lawrence, W.B. Yeats and others.

Post 1950, Postmodernism began to replace Modernism. The difference between Modernism and Postmodernism is not very stark and even today, we find the influence of Modernist forms of art such as Imagism on Postmodern works. Postmodern literature mainly gained prominence from 1960 onwards. Postmodern writers are inspired by their Modernist predecessors. The Postmodern writers refuse to confine themselves to boundaries. Therefore, experimentation in form and structure is quite common in their works. The use of metafiction, pastiche, intertextuality, and magic realism can be found in postmodern works. Post-Second World War, a trait of reasoning and rationale could be found in the writings. Developments in the fields of science and technology also took place. This, in turn, got reflected in the writings of social scientists as well.

Postmodern literature encourages a spirit of questioning. Postmodern writers believe that truth is perception-based. Clear binaries cannot be found in postmodern literature. Third space is a common feature in Postmodern works.

Furthermore, the Postmodern age is characterised by huge strides in the domains of travel and tourism. Since air travel improved significantly, the economic contours also changed. People migrated to other countries in search of work and this had a bearing on their psyche and thought process. The intermingling of cultures also took place that ushered in newer outlooks. Multiculturalism slowly gained prominence and so, Postmodern literature can be found to be imbibing different cultural strains. The influence of Ferdinand de Saussure also impacted the

usage of words. The meaning of a word might be the product of another word which is the product of some other word(s). Postmodernists, furthermore, believe that the predominant discourses in the contemporary social space reflect the interests of the dominant group, thereby, implying that there is an 'other'. The 'othering' of humankind eventually, gives rise to the marginalised sections of society who have always struggled to gain a foothold within the social mainstream.

Postmodern writers like Margaret Atwood, John Barth, Anthony Burgess, Italo Calvino, Bob Dylan, Umberto Eco, T.S. Eliot, Doris Lessing, Alice Munro, Toni Morrison, Haruki Murakami, Orhan Pamuk, Kurt Vonnegut explore the evolution of their characters. The narrative is not always continuous. The fragmented narrative demands a study of a particular text with relation to another text. Furthermore, these writers promote plurality in their writings. Other writers such as Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Kiran Desai, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Neel Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, V.S. Naipaul, Mahasweta Devi and others have focused on the cultural diversity, diasporic alienation, the cosmopolitanism of the present age. Gender issues and use of history also find mention in their writings. Some of the salient features in their writings include magic realism, bildungsroman, historical romance, etc. Some of the aforementioned writers have settled in the West. As a result, their writings combine streaks of both Indian and Western cultural codes. They focus on the themes of alienation, anxiety, inter-generational differences, different perceptions towards multiple cultures, etc. Some of these Indian-born writers focus on the problems that are plaguing presently. Issues of Left-wing extremism and other resistance movements have been mentioned in recent novels. Other issues like social reforms, education, social marginalisation are also discussed in recent works of literature.

Selected authors and their works

The six novels that the thesis will discuss are *Mother of 1084*, *The God of Small Things*, *Magic Seeds*, *The Inheritance of Loss*, *The Lowland* and *The Lives of Others*.

Mahasweta Devi (1926-2016), one of the selected authors in the thesis is a Bengali fiction writer. She was a social activist who was interested in exploring the lives of the marginalised and the tribal people. She wrote more than one hundred novels and short stories. Some of her works focuses on the Naxal revolution in India. She writes on the subaltern people, beggars, etc. For her literary achievements, she was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay award in 1997. She was also awarded the Sahitya Akademi, Jnanpith and Padma Vibhushan as well.

Mother of 1084 (published in 1974) is a heartbreaking story of a loving mother named Sujata who suddenly comes to know that her son Brati has died in police custody. Brati is now identified as corpse no. 1084. The novel brings forth the issue of police atrocity in Bengal during the 1970s. After her son's death, Sujata is interested to know the contexts that had prompted Brati to join the Naxals. So, she decides to meet some of the revolutionaries with whom Brati had worked. The novel is a social commentary on the conditions prevalent in Bengal during the 1970s. The author also discusses the family dynamics that were affected by the revolution.

Mother of 1084 proves Mahasweta Devi's literary maturity. The plot revolves around the psychological contours of a mother who has just lost her son. She struggles to keep the memories alive. The plot revolves around a single day when the protagonist Sujata revisits Brati's life and tries to understand the ideals for which Brati dedicated his life. Sujata feels an

affinity towards the ideals nurtured by Brati. She also comes to know the circumstances behind Brati's sacrifice. The death of Brati prompts Sujata to learn things hitherto unknown to her. Towards the end of the novel, Sujata gradually drifts towards the ideology propagated by Brati. Through the life of Brati, the author seems to draw the reader's attention towards the social injustices committed towards the marginalised sections of the society. Even in her personal life, Sujata is not happy. She discovers that her husband has been a philanderer throughout his life. Thus, the novel explores the character of Sujata in great detail.

Sujata meets the persons who were Brati's comrades. Through these meetings, Sujata understands Brati and his mission to change the world into an egalitarian one. This process of understanding alienates Sujata from her other family members. She understands the hypocrisy that characterises the contemporary social space.

The next author that the thesis discusses is Arundhati Roy. Born in 1961, Arundhati Roy, Arundhati Roy won the Man Booker Prize in 1997 for her novel *The God of Small Things*. Arundhati Roy is also involved in several social movements. Like Mahasweta Devi, Arundhati Roy takes a keen interest in social and environmental issues.

The God of Small Things tells the story of a Christian family based in Kerala. The 21 chapters of the novel are not essentially chronological, and the novelist uses the flashback technique of narration quite often. The past often intermingles with the present. The novel showcases a range of characters. We are introduced to Velutha, an untouchable, who works for a family. Velutha is considered to be an outcast because he is from a poorer caste. The reunion of the twins Rahel and Estha happens at the beginning of the narrative. The novel highlights the psychological state of being of the twins when they discover that their once magnificent

ancestral house is now nothing but a shadow of the glorious past. The novel also focuses on Rahel's travels to the US and then, back to India. The other characters who are introduced to us are the Ipes who are Anglicized Christians. Their fondness for Elvis Presley, Batman comics, and popular American television illustrates the diasporic and cultural alienation of a family. The sense of cultural isolation that the Ipes experience helps to classify the novel as a diasporic one. Therefore, in a nutshell, the novel is an account of the travels of the characters, their psychological state and anxiety and the interpersonal relationship that exists among the characters.

Born in 1932, Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul was a British-Trinidadian writer. V.S. Naipaul's origins can be traced back to India. His grandparents went to Trinidad to work as laborers in cocoa plantations. V. S. Naipaul wrote mainly fiction and non-fiction. His novels can be classified into 2 parts – the early period is marked by novels that were set in the Caribbean and the latter half consisting of narratives that were set around the world. Naipaul's writing style was appreciated by many since it was characterised by minute details. V. S. Naipaul wrote more than thirty books in his entire career. Naipaul's excellence as an author was widely recognised. He was awarded the Trinity Cross, Booker and finally, the Nobel Prize in the year 2001.

Magic Seeds is a sequel to the novel *Half a Life*. In the novel, the reader is introduced to a character named Willie Chandran. Willie lives in Berlin with his sister Sarojini. Willie is unhappy with his life in Germany and so, his sister suggests that he visit India. During his stay in India, Willie comes in contact with communist guerrillas who operate in some southern states in India. V. S. Naipaul must be referring to the Naxalites who are active in some southern

states of India. From the very beginning, Willie Chandran does not believe in the cause of the revolutionaries. However, he is afraid to leave the revolutionaries because he fears for his life. Willie gets familiar with the revolutionaries and through these interactions, he understands that not every revolutionary has a noble character. Some are just frustrated individuals who hardly have any ideological moorings. During the course of the plot, Willie is arrested by the police but later, he is released because the Indian government finds out that he is a published author. The incident proves the absurdity of the laws. After his release, Willie settles in a London suburb where reminisces the past and lives a sedentary life.

V. S. Naipaul believes that only the classical culture could provide refuge to a man who is otherwise alienated in a culturally bankrupt society. Naipaul promotes the same idea in *Magic Seeds*. Willie Chandran, after realising the moral bankruptcy of the revolutionaries feels that the only way to live life is to return to the classics. Some of the fellow revolutionaries of Willie are just frustrated individuals who could not even pass out of school. Critics say that Willie Chandran is the spokesperson of Naipaul. Like Naipaul, Willie wanted to be in a world where he felt a sense of belonging. Towards the end of the plot, Willie is found to be living in London amidst a culture steeped in the classics.

V. S. Naipaul considers the Naxal movement to be a political mimicry. He feels that the Indian Naxals pathetically wanted to replicate the Maoist revolution. Thus, he portrays the Naxal revolutionaries in a very poor light. The leader of the revolutionaries Kandapalli is never present. He is reluctant to lead the revolutionaries by example. The portrayal proves that Naipaul wants to project the revolution as something without a direction. This imparts a sense of frustration to Willie who eventually realises that the revolutionaries are not at all interested

about the wellbeing of the poor. They are busy extorting money from the people. The portrayal of the rebels as imbecile and cruel proves Naipaul scathing criticism of the Naxal movement. Most of the rebels in *Magic Seeds* are ego-centric people who are perverts to say the least. To cite an example, the character of Ramachandra is concerned about his small penis. The other characters are also not normal. They are egoistic and unconcerned about the society at large. They also have casteist mentality. They are racist and do not connect with the peasants of the neighbouring villages. Naipaul believes that the Naxal revolution has been an impediment to India's progress.

Kiran Desai, the daughter of Anita Desai, was born in the year 1971. Her second novel *The Inheritance of Loss* won the Man Booker Prize in 2006. Her first novel was *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* that was published exactly 8 years before *The Inheritance of Loss* hit the stands. She has won worldwide acclaim for her work from across the world including leading media houses such as The Economic Times. Desai also won the Betty Trask Award for her works. Although born in India, Desai left the country when she was only 14. Later, she completed her education from Columbia University.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, we have two parallel narratives running simultaneously. One narrative is set in Kalimpong while the other is set in downtown New York. The principal characters are the retired judge, his granddaughter Sai, Biju and his father, the cook and some minor characters. It is to be noted that all the characters are involved in some kind of immigration and eventually, they suffer from cultural alienation. For the retired judge, the cultural alienation seemed too much to bear that ultimately resulted in him leading the life of a recluse. The judge has a shady past and it can be indirectly related to his penchant of being an

Anglophile. He had killed his wife who could not speak English. We also come across the character of Biju who runs from pillar to post to avoid being arrested by the New York Police. Therefore, the tragedy that befalls the families all stem from the element of migration and the characters are subjected to immense suffering of isolation and cultural alienation. Furthermore, the setting of the novel is Kalimpong that has always been a fluid border zone since the place is surrounded by Nepal, Bhutan, China and Bangladesh. The region has been a refuge for people from the surrounding areas. Desai seems to stress that it is absurd to draw borders in the region since the map had always been messy. According to her, it won't be correct to blame the territorial issues only on the colonial past. Therefore, it can be said that Desai in *The Inheritance of Loss* casts her doubt from the very beginning on the ideological integrity of the Gorkhaland insurgents. The so-called Gorkhaland movement that claims to champion the demands of the marginalised Gorkhas has been put under the scanner in the novel.

Jhumpa Lahiri is the daughter of Bengali immigrant parents. Born in the year 1967, she is an Indian English writer of international repute. Her forte lay in short stories although she has left her mark in the genres of novels and essays as well. In the recent past, she has been engaged in some serious studies of the Italian language. Presently, she teaches at Princeton University. Her collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies* was published in 1999 and eventually received the Pulitzer Prize. Her second short story collection was called *Unaccustomed Earth* that again received rave reviews from critics from around the world. *The Lowland*, her second novel after *The Namesake*, was shortlisted for the Booker in 2013. Writing from her own immigrant experience, Jhumpa Lahiri mainly focused on the Indian immigrants who were settled in the US. *The Lowland* is no exception. However, Lahiri added the Naxalite movement to the narrative which aggravates the existential crisis of the characters in *The*

Lowland.

The Lowland by Jhumpa Lahiri is a family saga spanning a total of four generations. The narrative shifts back and forth between Calcutta and the US. The novel gives an intimate view of the individual characters' lives set on a rich and varied canvas. Subhash Mitra and his younger brother Udayan grow up in Tollygunge, a suburb of Calcutta, in the late 1960s and '70s. The period is marked by political unrest. As they near adulthood, Udayan becomes involved with the Naxalite movement while his brother Subhash leaves Calcutta to pursue a graduate degree in the US. For the first time since birth, the brothers are truly separated. Though the narrative follows Subhash leaving his childhood home, the story keeps revisiting Calcutta. Subhash and the entire cast of characters are inextricably tied to the metaphorical lowlands of Calcutta not just because of his family upbringing, but because of the events surrounding Udayan's violent death. After Udayan's death, more members of the Mitra family are dispersed, and Udayan's pregnant widow Gauri moves to the States with Subhash. Gauri is more reserved when interacting with other characters in the story, yet her perspective, as relayed by the narrative voice, is one of the most dynamic and revealing. Gauri's inner conflict with her marriage and motherhood brings forth a process of self-realisation similar to what was experienced by Sujata in *Mother of 1084*. Eventually, Gauri becomes a source of tension for Subhash. It is really difficult to decide whether Gauri's decisions can be supported. It is to be noted that Jhumpa Lahiri depicts how actions are never solitary; rather they are layered and intricately linked with the circumstances of the characters.

The Lowland is a novel of reckoning. The characters are always reminiscing their past. Although the characters are situated in different parts of the world, they are still connected to

the suburb of Tollygunje dotted with marshes and lowlands. Their roots still hold a meaning for them. Towards the end of the novel, the novelist inserts numerous reconciliations and disclosures. Just like other stories of Jhumpa Lahiri, at the end of the plot, Gauri tells Subhash that she is moving out. The trauma and disclosure that Lahiri uses towards the end of the plot bring forth many a secret that may not always be quite pleasant. We come to know that Udayan had indulged in a series of crimes when he was associated with the Naxalites. These disclosures hint towards the fact that the narrative of *The Lowland* may not be painted in simple black and white and a question is immediately raised on the integrity and action of the Naxals.

Neel Mukherjee, like Jhumpa Lahiri, is an Indian author who has settled in the West. He is mainly a novelist who is interested in the different social periods of a city or a region. Born in 1970, Mukherjee was educated at Jadavpur University and later, completed his Ph.D. from the Pembroke College, Cambridge. Neel Mukherjee's second novel *The Lives of Others* was shortlisted for the Man Booker in 2014. His earlier novel *Past Continuous* was acclaimed by critics from across the world as well.

The plot of *The Lives of Others* is set in Kolkata of the 1970s. The plot mainly revolves around the Ghosh family who runs a successful paper mill business. In other words, the Ghosh family can be classified as Capitalists. Interestingly, Supratik Ghosh, one of the heirs to the Ghosh family, joins the Naxals and starts to loathe the capitalist mentality of his own ancestors. The plot of the novel is interspersed with letters written by Supratik who had dropped out of college to join the Naxalites. Supratik carries with him Mao's 'little red book' which he uses to explain revolutionary theories to poor farmers. The main issues that Mukherjee deals with are family, class and violence in the light of the Naxalite movement that shook Bengal in the late

1960s and early '70s. The building where the Ghosh family resides reflects the different social strata. The top floor is occupied by the owners while the lower floors are occupied by the servants, widows and other people belonging to lower castes. The Ghosh family's business is in a state of decline because their paper mill has been suffering from recurrent strikes. Here Neel Mukherjee becomes an authentic chronicler of the time that is being portrayed in the novel. It is true that political disturbances took a toll on the industrial landscape of Bengal especially during the 1960s. On the other hand, workers discover that little has changed since India got her independence. Even now, the workers were being subjected to exploitation by capitalists such as the Ghosh family. Although Supratik is a member of the Ghosh family himself, he decides to bring an era of change in the social system. The different generations of the Ghosh family deal with new realities as power structures change over the years. To cite an example, the labour unrest in the paper mills run by the Ghosh family is led by an individual who is the son of the servant serving the Ghosh family.

Neel Mukherjee portrays the character of Supratik in a vein of irony. Being a member of the Naxalite party, Supratik claims to champion the rights of the poor. However, we also come to know that Supratik is not at all pleased when the family servant Madan admonishes him for his lackadaisical attitude towards his mother. There is intense patriarchy in the Ghosh household. As a result, the women folks are subjected to subservient roles. *The Lives of Others* deals with several themes simultaneously. After reading the novel, the readers get a clear insight into the Naxal revolution that had happened in Bengal during the 1960s and '70s. Other issues such as patriarchy and class struggle come within the ambit of discussion as well.

Cultural Hegemony

Apart from the aforementioned six novels, the thesis will be closely examining Antonio Gramsci and his theory of Cultural Hegemony. Antonio Gramsci was an Italian Marxist scholar. He was also a renowned linguist and sociologist. His theory of Cultural Hegemony is indebted to Marxism and so, he is called a neo-Marxist. He founded the Communist Party in Italy. During his stay in prison, Antonio Gramsci wrote the *Prison Notebooks* that is considered to be a seminal text. Niccolo Machiavelli and Benedetto Croce influenced Gramsci greatly. Gramsci studied the French revolution and Fascism and was influenced by folklore.

As already mentioned, Antonio Gramsci propagated the theory of Cultural Hegemony. Cultural Hegemony refers to the ruling of a state with the help of cultural and ideological means. The state manipulates the values, norms and beliefs prevalent in the society. Gramsci believes that Cultural Hegemony is invisible. Culture resides within us. Furthermore, culture is found in stories, images, rhetoric and is not always tangible. The state manipulates these cultural means and tries to impose a sense of hegemony on the people. When a culture becomes hegemonic, it is rechristened as Common Sense by the state. It becomes the normative behaviour of the society. The ruling class tries to dominate and control the subjects with cultural means that suits the interests of the rulers or the majoritarian community. Gramsci asserts that Cultural Hegemony is placed before the people in the garb of welfare measures. Thus, the people are made to believe that cultural hegemony is intended to implement welfare measures. Thus, the common people give their consent. Ultimately, this consent helps the establishment of the cultural hegemony that suits the interests of the majoritarian community.

Cultural Hegemony is an extension of Marx's belief that the society is controlled by

people who have the capital. To this, Antonio Gramsci added the factors of society, religion, media and beliefs that are often manipulated to fool the people. Gramsci also mentioned that education as a cultural means is often misused by those in power. The common people are made to believe that the existing reality is the ultimate state and so, to achieve that, education and other cultural means are tweaked to address the agendas of Cultural Hegemony.

According to Marx, ideology plays a significant role within the social space of a country. Gramsci believes that ideology plays its role within the spaces of religion and education. He further asserts that the intellectuals in a society helps the ruling class to implement the cultural hegemony. In other words, they act as abettors. Cultural Hegemony influences the collective belief of the society.

An offshoot of Cultural Hegemony is Cultural Materialism. Raymond Williams first coined the term Cultural Materialism. According to Williams, culture is a productive process or it can also be called a means of production. Cultural Materialists very often analyse how those in power use the canonical texts to their advantage. In other words, the canonical texts are often used to validate certain actions of the ruling class. Cultural materialists follow certain rules that pertain to a close textual analysis, historical context, theoretical method and political commitment. The Cultural Materialists are concerned with the subaltern sections of the society and deal with gender, sexual, race and class.

The present research takes into account the subaltern representation by the different authors. In fact, the definition of subaltern varies from novel to novel. The authorial stance also varies, for instance, in *Mother of 1084*, where Mahasweta Devi openly supports the Naxalites and presents the state as an agency of repression. Other novelists such as Jhumpa

Lahiri and Neel Mukherjee are not very confident of the objectives of the Naxal movement. V. S. Naipaul on the other hand, launches a scathing attack on the Naxalite movement and believes that the rebels do not have the moral integrity to continue the movement. Therefore, in order to examine the different perspectives, it is imperative for the researcher to examine the relevant issues of marginalisation through the prism of Cultural Hegemony.

Problem Statement

The problem statement is the negative implications of cultural hegemony on the societal framework and individuals as depicted in the selected works.

Chapter Scheme

Introduction: The Introduction provides an overview into the problem statement and the subsequent research gap. Furthermore, the Introduction explores Modernism, Postmodernism, the background of the selected authors and the respective novels. The Introduction provides a general outline of the theoretical framework of Cultural Hegemony and how the theory is to be used in the thesis by the researcher.

Chapter 1: Making of the Writers: As already mentioned in the Introduction, the biographical details of the writers are extremely important because the background might have played a pivotal role in the shaping of their thought processes. Chapter 1 will deal with the biographical details of the selected authors and discuss how their own lives have shaped their writings. While discussing so, the chapter will compare and contrast the different authorial stances and closely examine how the stances are linked with the problem statement and the research gap.

Chapter 2: Base and Superstructure: This chapter focuses on the Marxian concepts of Base and Superstructure. Base refers to the production forces while Superstructure refers to the cultural units of the society. It is important to analyse the selected works in the light of Base and Superstructure because the plots of the novels position the characters within the process of production. The characters demonstrate distinct shades of their respective culture. Thus, it can be said that culture plays an important role in shaping the emotional contours of the characters.

Chapter 3: Cultural Hegemony: This chapter will thoroughly investigate how Cultural Hegemony is used by those in power to retain their vested interests. While discussing, the historical background of Cultural Hegemony will be discussed and how Cultural Hegemony gave birth to subsequent lines of thought such as Cultural Materialism. In the selected six novels, there has been mention of the educational institutions, law enforcement agencies being misused by the political class to suit their own interests. The researcher will examine them closely and compare how the six novelists have responded to the subversion of social institutions by the political class in the respective novels.

Chapter 4: Cultural Alienation: All the six novels show some of isolation, be it political or social. Hence, this chapter will closely analyse the characters' isolation and how they react to the hegemonic stance of the majoritarian sections of the community. While discussing the anxiety of the characters that is born out of the cultural isolation, the researcher will take help of Antonio Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony. The researcher will examine the actions of the characters who try to subvert the narrative of the majoritarian section and how the society reacts to that.

Chapter 5: Transformation of Self: The protagonists in the six novels suffer from different kinds of cultural isolation. For the characters in novels such as *The Inheritance of Loss* and *The Lowland*, the alienation comes from the geographical dislocation of the expatriates. In novels such as *Mother of 1084*, *Magic Seeds* and *The Lives of Others*, the isolation stems from a difference in ideologies and beliefs. The researcher will delve deep into the characters' psyche and figure out how these alienations shape and mould the characters throughout the plot. The chapter will focus on how the characters are transformed after suffering isolation and alienation from the masses. Since all the novels are Postmodern texts, they end on a note of possibilities. The authors leave it to the reader's imagination on what might happen after the narrative is over.

Conclusion: The thesis chapters will have a provisional conclusion that will lead to the discussion in the subsequent chapter. The last chapter of the thesis titled 'Conclusion' will wrap up the research findings and demonstrate how the problem statement has been addressed during the research.

Review of Literature

In his Ph.D. thesis titled “Insurgent Imaginations: Culture, Postcolonial Planetarity and Maoism in India”, Auritro Majumder figures out how Naxalism developed in India. He also examines the reason why Naxalite movement gradually turned into a form of insurgency. Majumder’s thesis delineates the role of different literary texts in the formation of the Naxalite movement in India. In this context, Majumder takes up the works of Utpal Dutta, Mrinal Sen, and others and finds out how cinema as an art form depicted the Naxalite movement in India.

In her Ph.D. thesis, Mary Louisa Cappelli takes a close look at Mahasweta Devi’s works. Cappelli’s prism is mainly related to gender politics and how women are the worst affected in the event of social unrest. While discussing gender politics, she provides case studies of different countries such as Nicaragua, Botswana, Tanzania, etc. and compare how women of those countries fare in comparison with their Indian counterparts. Her interdisciplinary approach leads to the conclusion that patriarchy and the forces of globalisation go hand in hand in subjugating the women, especially of under-developed and developing nations. Her research is critical of the policies of neoliberal thinkers.

In her Ph.D. thesis, Deepali Bisht’s discusses postcolonial theory and how it can be related to *Mother of 1084*. She further examines the plights of the poor and tribal communities in India in the light of the novel. Her thesis deals with issues such as prevalent casteism, feudal system, bonded labor system and Naxalism. According to Bisht, Mahasweta Devi portrays the colors of motherhood, patriotism and nationalism and this is what the second chapter of her thesis depicts. She further believes that Mahasweta Devi deliberately introduced cultures, myths, and ethics of marginalised people because it establishes the relation between

nature and culture. According to her, *Mother of 1084* entirely focuses on various tribes of India and their beautiful traditions. The novel also describes the exploitation of the tribal culture and loss of identity that connects the dominance of mainstream society over the tribals. Bisht thinks that Mahasweta Devi describes double colonisation of women and crimes against them. Through her writing, she explains the irremediable condition of women due to the caste system, bonded labour system and sexual exploitation. The findings of her Ph.D. thesis will help me appreciate *Mother of 1084* as a commentary on the social fabric of Mahasweta Devi's times.

In his Ph.D. thesis, D.S. Yamuna mainly focuses on the local, historical, sociological and narrative environments that provide a distinctive identity to Indian writings in English. His thesis deals with the impact of regional sociologies on Indian literature. D.S. Yamuna explores Nativism as a concept and finds out how it is used in Indian English literature. Yamuna's thesis particularly focuses on Mahasweta Devi, Raja Rao and Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai. Yamuna, while discussing Mahasweta Devi's works, marvels at the narrative diversity of Devi's work. His thesis also throws light on the sociological aspect like religion and castes, myths, family structure. Therefore, it can be said that the thesis provides a background of Mahasweta Devi's work. The inputs provided by the researcher will certainly be useful in my work since I can use the information as the reference point while analyzing *Mother of 1084*.

In her doctoral thesis, Shelly Narang argues that the present age is of multiple prisms and the grand narrative of self devolves into multiple stories, circumscribed and dispersed to myriad locations of everyday life. The term acquires even greater intricacy when viewed from the perspective of gender politics. Narang's thesis examines feminism as a concept and how

feminism has influenced literary characters who struggle to gain a foothold in a multicultural space, possibly within an unfamiliar nation space. She feels that third-world women should not be stereotyped as belonging to a simple, monolithic category. Narang argues that communities are in a profound state of redefinition. So are histories, national cultures are myths that are witnessing a momentous change across the world. Narang feels that such a phase of transition has an adverse impact on women. The present research will be using Narang's inputs when the researcher analyses the character of Sujata. Sujata's transformation and her subsequent inclination towards the Naxalite ideology after being spurned by her husband should be analysed from a feminist perspective and Narang's thesis will be useful in this regard.

In his Ph.D. thesis, Kajalkiran Dwarkadas Bhandari considers *The God of Small Things* to be a postcolonial text. The critic feels that the novel essentially captures the histories, cultural mores and different literatures of the former colonies that are independent today. Bhandari asserts that Arundhati Roy's novel, like other postcolonial texts, combines the subaltern experience with marginalisation. Apart from them, we also find the mention of resistance movements in Arundhati Roy's narrative which is essentially a feature of postcolonial texts. The thesis will take the help of Bhandari's arguments in his Ph.D. thesis and further determine how the resistance movements protesting against such exclusion, denigration, and resistance actually give birth to another phase of hegemony. The circumstances, although, remain the same.

In his Ph.D. thesis, M. Goel attempts a study of gender discrimination that can be seen in the writings of Arundhati Roy, Namita Gokhale, Shobha De, etc. Goel believes that a study

of their novels actually brings out the life of subjugation and the sufferings that the women characters were actually subjected to. His thesis further focuses on the women's physical, financial and emotional exploitation along with their psychological anguish. Goel's research will be particularly important when my thesis analyses the character of Sujata in *Mother of 1084*. Sujata is also subject to a life of subjugation because of the inherent patriarchy that is present in her times. Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony can be brought in and argued that a different kind of hegemony can be seen in the *Mother of 1084* through the lens of patriarchy and interestingly, Sujata becomes inclined towards the Naxalites in order to escape from the shackles of patriarchy.

In her Ph.D. thesis, Indira Payasi studies the characterisation employed by Arundhati Desai in her novel. She feels that the novel examines the caste-ridden patriarchal society of Kerala and describes the fatal consequences of broken families. She further argues that the techniques employed in the novel such as architectonic plot, linguistic and rhetorical devices and accentual rhythm impart a unique character to *The God of Small Things*. The other topics that have been touched upon by Arundhati Roy are women and environment, Marxism, etc.

Dr. Payasi believes that Arundhati Roy's use of parallelism and symbols and her creation of the micro world provide a characteristic feature to the narrative. Although Dr. Payasi's research topic is not entirely aligned with mine, my own research can still use her study of the characters and accordingly, examine how characterisation can lead towards the use of the Naxalite movement in the novel.

In her Ph.D. thesis, A. Saridha attempts a comparative study between Shashi Deshpande and Arundhati Roy. She analyses the similarities and dissimilarities between the

writers. She further examines their lives and their struggles in their respective careers. Her approach consists of a detailed study of the primary sources with reference to the study of secondary sources by various critics. She further believes that the emergence of women novelists has considerably influenced the change in attitude as well. Their writings reflect a shift in the sensibility of the writer as well as the reader. The Indian women writers who are educated, express in their writings the dissatisfaction with the predicament women feel after being trapped in suppressive institutions such as child marriages, dowry, prohibitions on women's education, arranged marriages, domestic life, male and female relationship, patriarchal society, etc.

In her Ph.D. thesis, A. Vasavi throws light on the taboos of every kind in the social, cultural, religious and psycho-sexual spaces in the novels of Arundhati Roy, Taslima Nasrin and Yasmine Gooneratne. Her thesis highlights issues such as humanism and feminism. Dr. Vasavi feels that feminism has no specific definition. The general understanding that can be inferred from her thesis is that the works written by women and on women are termed as feminist works. The researcher feels that Arundhati Roy, Taslima Nasrin and Yasmine Gooneratne represent the sub continental sensibility which subsumes myth, culture, religion, social commentary and satire. The thesis can be said to be an amalgamation of socio-cultural aspects as projected by these a fore mentioned three novelists.

In his Ph.D. thesis, Thomas C. John studies Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*. Thomas John believes that the novelists counter the existing belief systems and social structures. Thomas' research basically infers that the aforementioned texts are examples of non-conformity against

the existing social beliefs. Thomas John states that in the study of Rushdie, non-conformity is applied to *Midnight's Children*. John's thesis also explores the mode of historiography. It includes how this new mode is brought forward through perspectives on history replacing the hard facts of the traditional historian. The thesis also discusses how the basic tenets of a literary fantasy bring about a rejection of the realist tradition and construct superior, alternate, secondary worlds. Furthermore, Thomas John analyses the use of memory as a narrative tool in *Midnight's Children*. While analysing Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*, Thomas shows how Seth has used language as a device of irony in an attempt to challenge the established customs and rituals.

While examining Arundhati Roy, Thomas' study analyses how the novelist frames a kind of 'nation language' in *The God of Small Things*. Arundhati Roy improvises the language and makes it reflective of the struggle that is a constant feature in any postcolonial discourse. Lastly, Thomas' study focuses on the convergence of the three writers in their linguistic appropriation for framing the new Indian English language. Thomas discusses how the linguistic contrarities of this new language succeeded in conveying the tensions of the people. The study concludes by showing the attempts of Rushdie, Seth and Roy at expressing a typical Indian sensibility in Indian English and how English, as a language, has transcended the borders of Europe and has come to be known as an entirely new language that respects the sensibilities and concerns of postcolonial nation spaces.

In his Ph.D. thesis, Omprakash Sharma believes that the prominence of India in the brief history of the Booker Prize is unquestionable. India and the Man Booker's link go back to the time of V. S. Naipaul who won the Booker Prize in 1971 for his *In a Free State*. Sharma

believes that Indian writings in English have undergone a series of evolutions. These days, the authors do not just express an idea or a fact. Indian literature as an art form has transcended that and has now become layered texts. This is the reason why Indian English writings have won acclaim from around the world. Sharma infers that Rabindranath Tagore was the first Indian who brought Indian English to the international arena. Tagore was the first Indian who won the Nobel in literature. Sharma's research further believes that the present-day era of Indian writings in English is experiencing an experimental process.

In his Ph.D. thesis, E.W. Khedkar believes that V. S. Naipaul is rightly considered to be the most significant writer of the contemporary period. As an expatriate writer and controversial critic of imperialism, V. S. Naipaul enjoys a unique position in the arena of world literature. Khedkar has skillfully exhibited significant craftsmanship in handling the multiplicity of different genres such as short stories, essays, autobiography, fiction, travel, and journalistic writing. His fictional world reveals a critical gaze on the world and also employs its ethnicity, customs and cultures. Khedkar has dexterously described the theme of a quest for identity besides a sense of displacement, alienation, exile, home coming, and enigma of survival of an individual as well as of the society in colonial and postcolonial times. He has adroitly delineated the dilemma of the immigrant's fractured consciousness resulting from transplantation, rootlessness, and exploitation. This analysis will help my research especially when I will be discussing *Magic Seeds* and *The Inheritance of Loss* where the pangs of anxiety of an immigrant are brought forth by V. S. Naipaul and Kiran Desai respectively.

Alka S. Nathrekar gives us an overview of Postcolonial criticism. She feels that the huge body of postcolonial criticism thoroughly discusses the nature of imperial process, its

socio-political aims and objectives, and the problem of homelessness, rootlessness, alienation, mimicry, and hybrid communities. Nathrekar believes that the history of colonialism is both violent and bloody. Since the discovery of the Caribbean islands in the 15th century, the Caribbean population was exploited physically, mentally and economically by the mighty Spanish, French and British imperial powers. The Spanish conquer or sex terminated the Native American population on the Caribbean Islands by replacing them with African slaves. The British imperialists brought poor laborers from India, China and other Asian countries for the farm work in the sugar cane plantations. This process resulted in homelessness, rootlessness, hybridity and loss of socio-cultural ethics. The political powers forced laborers to get imperial education but with a lack of political rights. Moreover, the fight against the imperial power led to numerous disturbances and confusions.

After discussing the imperial contexts of the Caribbean islands, Alka S. Nathrekar moves onto define imperialism. The word ‘imperialism, according to her, comes from the Latin word ‘Imperium’ which refers to ‘authority’ or ‘power.’ Nathrekar further observes that imperialism had destroyed ‘the other’, the oppressed physically, economically, historically and above all psychologically. Imperialism is a term that is often used in conjunction with colonialism. The colonised during the colonisation and de-colonisation had been forced to live with that fractured and fragmented consciousness. In her Ph.D. thesis, Alka S. Nathrekar infers that the narratives of exile, migration, transplantation and expatriation, mimicry, hybridity, the dilemmas and traumas of the divided figures originally begin from the postcolonial theories. The postcolonial theories and views speak about hybridity, ambivalence, mimicry, socio-ethnic loss, cultural colonisation, transplantation and socio-political unreality.

Vijay K. Babu comments on Naipaul as a West Indian writer. He believes that bestowing the Nobel Prize in literature on V. S. Naipaul in 2001 actually brought back the vibrancy of West Indian literature to the centrality of observing the dialectical analysis of New Literatures in English. Naipaul's contribution and his literary eminence have become so strong that the whole gamut of New Literatures has to be re-examined to strike a balance between his literary, ideological and theoretical contributions. Vijay Babu infers that though it is appropriate to trace the evolution of West Indian writings to offer the dialectical analysis of Naipaul's early writings, the primary proposition is to concentrate on the later works of Naipaul. Babu's analysis of the ideological bent of Naipaul's mind will prove to be significant for my own research when the present research explores the factors of ideologies, both authentic and misplaced, in *Magic Seeds*.

Similar to Vijay Babu's analysis, Sarita Devi observes that there have been influences and experiences that have shaped the writings of Naipaul. Sarita Devi opines that V. S. Naipaul provides in his writings, perspectives related to both colonial and postcolonial cultures. Sarita Devi believes that V. S. Naipaul examines the problems and complications of postcolonial nation and social spaces. The major themes related to these societies are the problems of the colonised people and their sense of alienation, their identity crisis along with their search for freedom. Sarita Devi infers that V. S. Naipaul was not happy with his Trinidadian identity. The novelist held the opinion that Trinidad could not stimulate his creative urges. He condemned the Caribbean as the "Third World's third world" (Devi 8).

In her Ph.D. thesis, Sunita Dhankar believes how oppression is a diverse phenomenon that has been a consistent feature of human civilization. Different sociologists, psychologists,

anthropologists and thinkers have their own take on its meaning as well as the dynamics playing behind it. In her thesis, Dr. Dhankar has included the orists from different fields so that a composite, comprehensive view of the various factors of oppression can be taken into account. The reactions of the oppressed and the resistance displayed by them have also been considered in making this selection. The thesis examines how oppression and resistance operate in the colonial, post-colonial, culturally displaced, patriarchal, economically exploitative and racist societies that Naipaul depicts in his novels.

In his doctoral thesis, Shivraj Subhanrao Mangale primarily focuses on Naipaul as a travel writer. The critic feels that Naipaul is an introvert who depicts the world and its people enthusiastically. However, his criticism of the world is often acerbic and mocking but it is never removed from the truth. *The Middle Passage* is his first non-fictional work. It is an account of a visit he made to the Caribbean in the year 1960 after living in England for many years. Here, Naipaul provides graphic detail of the West Indian society as it is. Subhanrao Mangale's findings will prove to be significant for my research because in *Magic Seeds*, V. S. Naipaul provides a very negative portrayal of the insurgents who surround Willie Chandran. V. S. Naipaul's thinking process can be analysed in the light of Shivraj Subhanrao's findings.

In his Ph.D. thesis, Shashank Gupta deals with Naipaul's treatment of history and civilization. He feels that most of the non-fictional works of V. S. Naipaul, to an extent, are fraught with historical events. Furthermore, V. S. Naipaul talks about a nation's cultures and traditions in his works. Dr. Gupta believes that the civilization of different places and ages attracted V. S. Naipaul and he looked forward to the word 'civilization' to clear his concept of culture, race, milieu, tradition and so on.

In his Ph.D. research, T. Gangadharan focuses on the dilemma of migrants. Gangadharan observes that Naipaul inherits the sense of dislocation and dispossession of the expatriates from his own experiences. V. S. Naipaul's fictions depict his constant sense of non-belongingness. Gangadharan takes up V. S. Naipaul's 5 novels: *The Mimic Men*, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, *A Bend in the River*, *Magic Seeds* and *Haifa Life*. Gangadharan infers that these novels clearly bring out Naipaul's changing vision of colonial displacement, angst, postcolonial chaos and transnational vision.

In her doctoral research, Tamali Neogi argues that fluidity, fragmentation, cross-cultural interaction, hybridisation are terms that generally figure in any discourse on diaspora because, the diasporic experience is marked by heterogeneity and cultural diversity and it is also the reason why one who belongs to a diaspora, has to constantly invent and reinvent himself. Neogi believes that diaspora creates a kind of contact zone where separate cultural communities interact with one another. She further states that diasporic identities are in a constant state of creation and re-creation. This observation is particularly significant because it forms the crux of any diasporic literary work. While analyzing *The God of Small Things*, *The Inheritance of Loss* or *The Lowland*, I can use Dr. Neogi's findings in my own research and use them accordingly.

In his Ph.D. thesis, Abhinav Kumar Singh makes a comparative study of Monica Ali and Kiran Desai. Singh researches the female identity and how the female characters in Ali's and Desai's novels struggle for their sustenance. Singh believes that the Indian construct of feminism is quite different from its Western counterpart because of the difference in cultural backgrounds. However, Singh observes that patriarchy rules supreme in almost every

social space and hence, women have always been relegated to a lower position in the social hierarchy. She was also not exposed to any participation in the agencies of power and therefore, she was subjected to a state of marginalisation. Religious codes of conduct have further compounded the problem. This analysis holds true for the character of Sujata in *Mother of 1084* and Sai in *The Inheritance of Loss* where both characters are often relegated to a state of non-entity.

In her doctoral research, Asrin Fakhr makes a critical analysis of three Booker Prize winning novels that include *The God of Small Things*, *The Inheritance of Loss* and *The White Tiger*. Her research also takes into consideration the other works by these aforementioned three novelists. Asrin Fakhr's thesis is mainly focused on the different literary aspects like plot and story, characters, themes, narrative technique, point of view, language, setting and structure used by the novelists. She also traces a brief history of the Indian English fiction in her thesis.

In her doctoral thesis, Ashalata Kulkarni makes an overview of the Indian women diaspora writers. She observes that the contribution of the women writers is equally significant as they represent experiences based on gender politics. Until the 1960s and 70s, immigration was a male phenomenon but in later periods, change of environment, culture, lack of education and professional skills marked the initial migrations of women, and this further gave rise to the first generation of women writers of the post-independence period such as Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prasad Jhabvala, Kiran Desai, etc.

In his Ph.D. thesis, R Sivakumar attempts a semantic interpretation of *The Inheritance of Loss*. Sivakumar believes that ideas may be conveyed through the spoken and the written

forms of a language. Sometimes, they may be revealed through gestures, actions, etc. It can be said that his analysis is made in the light of Saussurean school of thought.

In his Ph.D. thesis, C.S. Senthil examines the novels of Kiran Desai: *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of Loss*. He considers the use of various literary components and approaches related to phonological and morphological sources. The critic also studies discourse strategies in his Ph.D. thesis.

In her Ph.D. thesis, Sonika Badhwar, while examining postcolonial novels, believes that the history of a place or nation, needs to be incorporated into a narrative because it presents multiple views, which cumulatively constitute identity. The critic believes that the postcolonial writer of historical narrative brings with him a notion of the ‘story’ that lies embedded in the ‘facts’ given by the record. Historical novels, an example of fictionally narrated history, on the other hand, present before us a reality that is not always real. After all, historical novels are set in a narrative background that may date back to a few hundred years. The readers are shifted back to a certain time and space in the past. The fictional characters evolve against a background of their socio-political heritage. These historical writers endeavor to postulate their own version of the history of their people, and thereby, reject the traditional history.

While analysing *The Inheritance of Loss*, Md. Jakir Hossain explores the concept of place and how in today’s world, the word has acquired multiple meanings and connotations. Thinkers like Edward Relph and John Agnew have indicated that the world ‘place’ imbibes cultural variations and sociological connotations. In a diasporic space, for instance, a place may have different meanings because geographically it is different but culturally, there can be

similarities. Hence, simplifying the world ‘place’ is not advisable. Hossain’s analysis will help me understand the characters of Biju and the judge who were displaced and became marginalised. Therefore, his thesis will provide a backdrop to the present research.

Coming to the literature review of *The Lowland*, Dr. Manisha believes that a person who migrates from a different culture takes time to assimilate himself into a new culture. It has been seen that before assimilating, he lives with his own culture and traditions. By knowing the new culture, he tries to make space in that land that is quite unknown to him. The lack of ability to communicate is also one of the reasons that lead to a loss of identity. The critic observes that making a room in an alien land and encountering a new culture can be very challenging. Jhumpa Lahiri’s novels present an idea that immigrants hardly come in real contact with the natives of their new land and when they try to be familiar with the natives, then, it has been seen that some of them want to maintain a gap between them. Dr. Manisha also observes that a woman finds it more difficult to assimilate into the host society.

In his Ph.D. thesis, Mangesh Madhukar Gore introduces the concept and theory of diaspora in details. His thesis throws light on the origin and different aspects of diaspora that have been brought into focus in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri. The critic attempts to analyse various features of this term. Gore has also highlighted the old and new theories of diasporas. He has described how the journey of this expatriate experience of mankind has turned from an expatriation theory into a diasporic one. In the past, these theories were associated mostly with exile, anguish and suffering. However, today, the theories are linked with transnational identity in national literatures. The researcher further believes that eminent scholars have interpreted multiple strands of diasporic theories. These theories have often been analysed

from different points of view in this age of globalisation, dual citizenship and outsourcing. The thesis also explains terms such as identity, home, multiculturalism, nostalgia, sense of loneliness, alienation, belonging, in-betweenness, cultural assimilation and their importance in diaspora studies and literature. Lastly, in his thesis, Gore has analysed structure and the different phases of the Indian diaspora.

Deepa Sarabhai feels that although there are many thematic aspects of Jhumpa Lahiri's works that have been researched till now, yet the language that the novelist uses has been left unexplored. Sarabhai further believes that Jhumpa Lahiri's stories carry a world of human emotions and feelings. The plots are more of a psychological nature, and they sweep away the readers in their own imaginary world. Therefore, a psycholinguistic study will be a very fruitful and relevant study. The researcher believes that this kind of study will truly give a different insight to Lahiri's readers.

Rashmi J. Soni, while making a comparative analysis of Jhumpa Lahiri and Manju Kapur, comments that the cultural dilemmas are the most significant aspects that need to be observed when it comes to diaspora. Her examination of Manju Kapur and Jhumpa Lahiri throws light on the travails of the characters and how they negotiate cultural differences in the host society.

In his doctoral thesis, Rajendrakumar D. Suthar observes that in *The Lowland*, Jhumpa Lahiri is concerned with the Naxalite movement as much as with the diasporic lives of Subhash and Gauri. According to him, Jhumpa Lahiri describes an extraordinary tale of brotherly love, familial responsibilities and marital compromises as well as the impact of history on personages. Later, he comments on the diasporic alienation of the characters. Suthar

observes that Jhumpa Lahiri's works are embodiments of diverse experiences that the Indian immigrants pass through during their hyphenated lives because the host society in which they inhabit is characterised by the multiplicity of religion, culture, history, philosophy and ways of living.

Simple Chaudhury makes a comparative study of Jhumpa Lahiri and Kamala Markandaya. She observes that Jhumpa Lahiri's fictions are essentially autobiographical with details from her personal experiences. As a diasporic writer, she is superb in her portrayal of the lives of Indian migrants to America. With the probing eye of a psychologist, Jhumpa Lahiri is at her best in analysing the immigrant mind with its angst and dreams. Realistically portraying her characters in their emotional ties to family and friends, Jhumpa Lahiri has excelled as a storyteller of high calibre. In *Unaccustomed Earth*, she makes her observations of the second-generation Indian Americans absorbed into the Western milieu. Chaudhury feels that Lahiri's stories continue to hinge on the sense of alienation and isolation of characters in their quest for identity. Simple Chaudhury further believes that Jhumpa Lahiri's stories dealing with uprooting as well as assimilation in the backdrop of diasporic experiences of the first and second-generation Indians are intense studies of multiple identities and psychological analysis. In his Ph.D. thesis, Daulatrao Ram Kakde compares the works of Kiran Desai, Manju Kapur and Jhumpa Lahiri. He observes that these three women writers have taken into account the social, cultural, economic and historical perspectives while writing the novels. Kakde further believes that it is pivotal to highlight a brief overview of the history of Indian women from Manu (a saint and the writer of *Manusmriti*) to Mahatma Phule (a modern social reformer) if one wants to know about Indian womanhood that has evolved over the ages. He also believes that before highlighting the history of Indian women, it is necessary to know the

concept of 'Image'. Kakde then moves on to explore the socio-economic contexts of Indian writings in English and how they have shaped and influenced Indian women writers. These observations will prove to be valuable because my thesis can use them while analysing the female characters of the chosen novels.

In her Ph.D. thesis on *The Lives of Others*, Rekha Malhotra believes that the English language has undergone many transformations and in the process, has given birth to a literary tradition that is very different from the conventional English tradition of Europe. However, one of the drawbacks has been the decline of regional literature owing to the growth of Indian writings in English. Malhotra believes that to reach out to a wider audience, Indian writers write in English. Therefore, to trace the pattern of evolution of the English language in the subcontinent, one needs to track the shifting nature of vernacular literature as well.

While analysing *The Lives of Others*, Supratim Das argues that in the age of post-nationalism, the orthodox notions of nationalism have been debated. Social theories like post-modernism, post-colonialism and post-Marxism have added to this debate. Starting as a school of historiography and concerned with the discourses of 'emancipatory politics' and 'social justice' and then, maturing into a tool of radical history-writing, Subaltern Studies have kept up with the time and engaged with the theoretical debates of social science in the global arena. The twists and turns in the development of the Naxalite movement, which initially concerned itself with peasant insurrections but over the years, underwent a shift towards such problems as the representation of the subaltern, have been located in the present work.

Shirguppe Sanjeevani Vitthal believes that the post-independence period marks the richness in Indo-Anglian fiction. Writers like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, R.

Prawer Jhabwala, Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai and Santha Rama Rao appeared on the literary scene with ample variety. The critic further observes that the issues of caste and class have always remained a constant factor despite the progress made in the domains of economy and politics. They affected Indian society to a great extent. Any literary work has always given precedence to society and Indian writings in English are no different. In his thesis, Vitthal mainly studies the aspects of class and caste and representations of these concepts in Indian English novels.

In her Ph.D. thesis, Somdatta Bhattacharya mainly takes into account the history and the geography of the city of Kolkata and how they have been represented in novels such as *The Lives of Others*. She also looks at the cultural representations of post-independence Kolkata. She comments that Kolkata's rich historical wealth should be taken into account when one is conducting a study of the city. According to the critic, this should be done by indicating some of the important landmarks in the history of the city. The researcher also traces the changes that have come about in the physical geography of the city.

Coming to the literature review of Antonio Gramsci, Jacinda Swanson demonstrates how the political and economic dynamics have undergone sea changes in the U.S.A. She further focuses on the internal economic dynamics in the country. More specifically, Jacinda Swanson's thesis investigates how the economy and its relation to politics are conceptualized in academic and non-academic discourses, the effects of these conceptualizations, and how many of these conceptualizations can be improved upon. In the form of three case studies, she critically analyses examples of popular discourses during President Jimmy Carter's administration and the works of Robert Dahl and John Rawls whose theories have had a

substantial influence on political science. Despite Dahl's and Rawls' explicit concerns about the economy's effects on democracy and equality, they often end up assuming the existence of inexorable economic laws and treating economics, politics and culture as distinct, autonomous spheres. Yet such conceptualization are problematic both theoretically and politically. Her thesis will prove to be useful when the present research analyses Gramsci's theory of Cultural hegemony. However, Swanson has not applied Gramsci's theory on any literary texts. Similarly, Robert Carley provides a historical interpretation of Gramsci's political thought process. Carley investigates the volatile nature of certain political groups such as social movement groups and how their objectives change when they aim to realise certain political goals. Carley believes that in order to understand the subtle nuances of Gramsci's Cultural hegemony, one has to look at the operations of political groups across the world and how they manipulate the word 'culture' as per their needs.

In his thesis, Saji Varghese explains the definitions of the terms 'dominance' and 'hegemony.' He says that dominance is known to be shown or exercised by a dominant group over subordinate groups, and 'direction' is exerted over allies. If a group can assert its direction over another group that was originally an enemy, it can now be called an ally rather than an enemy. According to Varghese, Gramsci makes it clear that the 'direction' is a necessary pre-requisite for the attainment of state apparatus or the government that is in power. Thus, all the aspects of supremacy, direction and dominance coexist within the state. Varghese infers that hegemony, in short, is a paradigm in which both domination and direction are practiced.

In his thesis, T.S. Girishkumar provides us with a brief outline of the growth and

development of the concept of ideology. T. S. Girishkumar believes that in common parlance, the term 'ideology' means an ideal, a set of beliefs or a set of ideas that guide, shape and inspire not only man's life, but also, his cognitive enterprise. In this sense, there can be social, political, religious and economic ideologies. Furthermore, ideology is also used in the sense of a norm or a standard. In this sense, ideology stands for a set of ideas that shape and direct the theoretical enquiry of man in general.

From my literature review of Gramsci's theory on Cultural hegemony, what I could infer was that no researcher tried to apply Gramsci's theory of Cultural hegemony on any literary work. Hence, that is a research gap that I intend to bridge. The standalone investigations on Gramsci's work do not have any tangible link with literature. Furthermore, as evident from the literature review, no book-length study exists in the domain of the impact of the Naxalite and the Gorkhaland movements on the characters of the six novels, viz., *Mother of 1084*, *The God of Small Things*, *Magic Seeds*, *The Inheritance of Loss*, *The Lowland* and *The Lives of Others*. Although, a lot has been said on diasporic alienation, identity crisis, shifting dynamics of gender, and power politics, the use of militant movements as narrative tools in my chosen novels remains under-explored. Furthermore, the thesis argues that Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony actually remains although the resistance movements present within the novels contest the dominant groups. Ironically, the resistance movements fall prey to the same hegemonic trap and nothing changes at the end. This is the research gap that the present research has explored.

Research Objectives:

1. To trace the historical roots and discuss the literary contributions of the selected writers

2. To apply Antonio Gramsci's concept of Cultural Hegemony on the select works
3. To examine the issues of 'The People' and related 'Common Sense' based on textual study
4. To analyse the struggle of the marginalised community to defeat the repressive power of the dominant group

Proposed methodology for the achievement of the objectives:

The present research work falls in the category of qualitative research. Thus, the suitable methodology is textual analysis. To make the said analysis, approaches like discussion, interpretation, exploration, and comparison will be adopted to determine how Cultural Hegemony is often manipulated to suit the vested needs of the so-called resistance movements. The authorial approaches will help to compare and contrast the depiction of the Naxalite and Gorkhaland movements and the treatment given to the subaltern characters depicted in the selected novels. While examining relevant information, the thesis will primarily deal with secondary sources that are available online. In this context, the researcher will be taking the help of JStor and Proquest which have a plethora of research articles and papers. For referencing, the researcher will be using the MLA 9th edition style sheet. While examining secondary sources, the researcher will consider peer-reviewed journal papers since they are the most authentic and hence, most credible. The researcher will be very careful regarding the quality of evidence that he cites in the work.

Chapter: One

Making of the Writers

The thesis explores the selected writings of six Indian English novelists namely, Mahasweta Devi, Arundhati Roy, V.S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri and Neel Mukherjee in the light of Antonio Gramsci's theory of Cultural Hegemony. Hence, it is imperative to understand, in this chapter, the selected writers' biographical details, contexts and how those have shaped their thought processes and writings. Although the selected six authors may be living outside India, they share the same cultural roots of India. Their narration in the novels reflects Indianness and they have successfully written about Indian themes and contexts. This chapter also takes into account the selected writers' works and determines if there is any thematic similarity among the chosen authors. While discussing the making of the writers, the chapter focuses on the upbringing, education and family spaces of the authors. Furthermore, the places where the writers have lived have also been found to have a profound impact on their writing styles and topics. Hence, the chapter examines the backgrounds of the novelists in detail and finds out the factors that have prompted them to write the novels that are to be studied and analysed during the course of the present research. It is imperative to note that the thesis discusses the selected six novels. Therefore, the characters in the novels may not always represent the masses. Furthermore, the political scenarios of India and Italy during the time when Antonio Gramsci lived, are entirely different. The thesis uses the Gramscian model only as the theoretical framework.

Mahasweta Devi has always been a forerunner in activist literature. She has challenged the establishment time and again and so, her writings are considered to be seminal texts in countering the hegemonic influences prevailing in the society. Mahasweta Devi is the first novelist who will be discussed in the chapter. The background of the novelist and the cultural parameters that have moulded her writings also come under the scope of the discussion.

Mahasweta Devi (14th January 1926 – 28th July 2016)

Mahasweta Devi was born on 14th January, 1926 in what is now called Bangladesh. Her father Manish Ghatak was himself a novelist while her mother Dharitri Devi was a social activist. In fact, her family was all along involved in social activities. Her uncle Ritwik Ghatak was a famous film director known for his films on different social issues. Mahasweta Devi's husband Bijon Bhattacharya was a playwright known for his radical Leftist ideas. He was also famous for his production *Nabanna* (Fresh harvest) that was produced in 1943. In a subsequent play called *Jiyonkanna*, Bijon Bhattacharya launched Mahasweta Devi in a lead role. Bhattacharya's association with the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) gave birth to a number of radical ideas. Perhaps, this was one of the reasons why Mahasweta Devi was attracted towards him.

Right from a tender age, Mahasweta Devi was engrossed in social service. She started her career by educating illiterate girls in Dhaka. When Mahasweta Devi was 30, her first novel *The Queen of Jhansi* was published. The novel was a fictionalised account of real life queen turned warrior who fearlessly fought against the British. It appeared as

if the Rani of Jhansi had become some kind of an ideal for the young writer.

While writing the novel, Mahasweta Devi started touring different parts of northern India. It was during these travels that she became familiar with the folklores, tales and oral narratives surrounding Rani Laxmi Bai. It also happened that during these meetings with the village and tribal communities, Mahasweta Devi first came face to face with the rural India and its environs. After these interviews, Mahasweta Devi believed that the most authentic historical material came from the memory of the village elders. This is the reason why we find the presence of folk narratives and memory-based folk tales in her novels and short stories.

Her travels during this period signalled the start of a lifelong journey that was characterised by her familiarity with the rural India. She also stepped out of the confines of the four walls of the Bengali household that was still dominated by patriarchy and repression. It was this familiarity with the rural India that eventually influenced her to write more than 100 novels and short stories on the society's subalterns – the beggars, nomads, farmers, prostitutes and even the Naxals. Her efforts to highlight the marginalised sections of the community won praise and accolades from across the world including the Ramon Magsaysay award, the Padma Shri, the Padma Vibhushan, Jnanpith, Sahitya Akademi, Desikottama, etc. It is often said that Mahasweta Devi fought vehemently against injustice in any form. This tirade against injustice often forced her to lock horns with adversaries on matters related to land, religious intolerance, gendered repression, tribal and human rights and state oppression.

As mentioned earlier, Mahasweta Devi had toured several North Indian states while she was writing the novel on the Rani of Jhansi. During these travels, she came in contact with the Lodha tribe of Midnapore, the Khedia Shobors of Purulia and Chhotanagpur, the Dhikaros of Bribhum, the Santhals of present day Jharkhand, etc. This coming in contact with the tribal people strongly influenced Mahasweta Devi. She started having a first-hand experience of the problems of these communities and the way in which they were socially ostracised. During this time, Mahasweta Devi also became involved with the Tebhaga peasant movement. The peasant movement was launched under the guidance of the Communist Party and Mahasweta Devi became a member of the cultural group that regularly organised programmes to raise awareness in the Rangpur district of undivided Bengal in pre-independent India. During this time, she was also a witness to the horrific famine that had gripped Bengal. It was an open secret that the famine in Bengal was man made and the British government made no effort to contain the crisis, leave alone resolve it. All these events were significant in the making of the novelist. Mahasweta Devi also came in touch with the problems of the landless farmers and the tenancy acts that were heavily against the peasants.

After her marriage, Mahasweta Devi and her husband Bijon Bhattacharya relocated to Mumbai. While in Mumbai, Bhattacharya and Devi started working for IPTA. Other IPTA members such as Salil Chowdhury and Khwaja Ahmed Abbas helped them bring out cultural productions under the aegis of IPTA. Bijon Bhattacharya's play *Nabannna* was converted into a film called *Dharti ke lal*. It is said that while Mahasweta Devi was in Mumbai, she came to know that a consignment of rhesus monkeys was

stranded at Bombay port because of certain bureaucratic hurdles. Mahasweta Devi went to the port, got the consignment and eventually released the monkeys in the hills of Khandala. This incident perhaps proved beyond doubt that Mahasweta Devi was one of a kind. She never cared for the so called civilities of the Bengali middle class. Any form of injustice simply infuriated her.

Initially, her professional career was not much successful. She worked as a salesperson, clerk and did other mundane jobs. Eventually, she acquired an M.A. degree and started working as a lecturer in English in Bijoygarh College, Kolkata. Nevertheless, her job as a lecturer never stopped her from travelling extensively through the length and breadth of the country. She chronicled the lives of the tribals and their stories and tried to immortalise their struggles through her writings. In her works like *Operation Bashai Tudu*, *Aranyer Odhikar* and *Chotti Mundar Tir*, she brought the tales of these marginalised tribal communities to the readers of Bengal and beyond. Through these stories, Mahasweta Devi highlighted the rights of the tribal communities, their relationship with the land and the forests and above all, the colonial government's ruthless oppression of the villagers. She strongly supported the dignity of the tribal communities.

Her relentless work for the marginalised ultimately led to the formation of the Denotified and Nomadic Tribes Rights Action Group (DNT-RAG). This group started work in a more organised manner for the benefit of the tribes and their communities. Mahasweta Devi was often referred to as 'Ma' by the tribals. In fact, she was like a

mother figure who never hesitated to stand by the side of the Santhals and Sabars and other such communities. In one such instance, she filed a PIL in Calcutta High Court casting doubt on the custodial death of Budhan Sabar, a tribal. She won the case in the High Court and the State had to compensate the wife because it was proved that Budhan had died of torture. Mahasweta Devi also fought for political prisoners who were jailed in different parts of Bengal. She was completely against any kind of injustice meted out by the state machinery in the name of development and justice. Towards the end of her life, she was actively involved with the protesters in Singur and Nandigram who had been protesting against the forceful land acquisition of the Left Front government in the years 2006 to 2008. Her protests eventually led to the collapse of the Left Front government that had been in power in West Bengal for 34 years. Having said that, Mahasweta Devi never had the political ambition. She was always at ease with landless peasants and working for them. Her main contribution was that she had lent a voice to the voiceless communities living on the periphery of the social space.

Coming to her notable works, Mahasweta Devi's work on Birsa Munda in *Aranyer Adhikar* won her the Sahitya Akademi in 1979. The armed uprising that Birsa Munda had led against the British caught the fancy of the writer. Her story of Brisa Munda upheld the dignity and the resistance that these communities offered. The adversary was clearly the state and its anti-people policies.

The issues surrounding the tribal communities were not the only ones that were disturbing Mahasweta Devi. She was an advocate of women's liberation as well. In

Talaq, we find a rural Muslim couple's protest against the age old divorce system. The couple elope together to escape the shameful practice of having to consummate a marriage with another man before the girl can be reunited with her estranged husband.

Her *Hajar Chrashir Ma (Mother of 1084)*, chronicles the story of Sujata, who after the death of her son, Brati undergoes a process of self-realisation. In this novel, Mahasweta Devi highlights the state repression during the Naxalite movement that had hit Bengal in the 1960s and 70s. We find how the Naxalites were brutally killed by the police. We also come across the apathetic attitude of the Bengali middle class towards the revolutionaries. On a macro level, the protagonist Sujata realises her growing affinity with the deeds of her dead son Brati. The novel ends with endless possibilities. It will not be a surprise if Sujata eventually joins the Naxalities. On a micro level, Sujata realises her husband's infidelity and how she has been trapped within the confines of patriarchy. Sujata also realises her isolation within the family because no one else can identify with the pangs and anxiety of Sujata.

Carlotta Beretta believes that the character of Sujata undergoes a process of self-realisation. She moves from a micro to a macro plane. In fact, "Sujata, the mother of Brati Chatterjee represents the anguish of all mothers who bear the pain of seeing their children suffer in the hands of the state" (Beretta 69). The novel is a poignant portrayal of motherhood and the loss of a mother. This journey of self-discovery is powerfully depicted in the novel. Mahasweta Devi's own son Nabarun was actively involved with the Naxalites and hence, it can be said there are biographical elements in *Mother of*

1084. Mahasweta Devi believed that the Naxalite movement failed in Bengal because the contemporary intellectuals did not identify themselves with the goals of the movement. That was the main reason why the movement lost its momentum and eventually failed.

In another novel *Draupadi*, Mahasweta Devi tells the story of a tribal woman Dopdi Mejhen who is gang raped by the police. Like her namesake in the *Mahabharata*, Dopdi is disrobed but she bravely tears up her sari and exposes her nakedness. The act is a metaphor of the shamelessness of the society and the hypocrisy to which the state is associated with. In another story, *The Breast Giver*, Mahasweta Devi narrates how Jashoda nurses the children of her master and mistress. In all these stories, Mahasweta Devi seems to focus on the plight of the marginalised people who are exploited by the so-called educated middle and upper classes. Critics like Ilina Sen believe “Mahasweta Devi’s writings on tribal life are intimate and clearly identify the state and its agents as violent oppressors of the people” (Sen). Mahasweta Devi is a hardcore feminist and her feminism is born out of her experiences and encounters with the prevailing patriarchy of the contemporary social space. Some other critics like Urmil Talwar believe that Mahasweta Devi’s “oeuvre subverts the grand narratives of colonialism, patriarchy, caste system and class division. She depicts the fate of women who are twice colonised and victimized in the Indian social system but resists the term feminism as she proficiently displays the exploitation of the lower class and tribal men as her emphasis is on class and not on gender” (Talwar 218). She was always drawn towards the people who had no access to medical facilities or education and who had to lead an abominable existence.

Critics often complain that Mahasweta Devi lived a life of utopian idealism that was far removed from reality. Her characters were painted in black and white. In fact, it was often pointed out that for the author, the state policies were always wrong and the tribals were always fighting against the landlords who were epitomes of evil. Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak also complained that the tribals in Mahasweta Devi's works were noble savage and they were always on the right side of the law. Nevertheless, her dark humour and incisive narration exposed the hypocrisy of the capitalist class. She never shied away from calling a spade a spade.

Mr. G.N. Devy once commented that it was impossible to predict when, in the middle of the politest conversation with persons she had not previously met, Mahasweta Devi would curtly dismiss civility and tell the person that he was a fraud.

Mahasweta Devi has been credited to have discovered the first Dalit writer of Bengali. The story goes like this. Manoranjan Byapari who was a namasudra by caste used to pull rickshaws in Kolkata. During breaks, he used to read and write a lot. He often kept a book with him in his rickshaw that he read while taking rest. It so happened that Mahasweta Devi one day took the services of Byapari while commuting to her college where she taught English. Manoranjan Byapari thought, after seeing Mahasweta Devi in a white sari and bound for the college, that she must be a very learned lady. Manoranjan asked her the meaning of *jijibisha*, a Bangla word that meant 'the will to live'. Mahasweta Devi not only described the meaning of the word to Byapari but also invited him to write something for a magazine named *Bartika* that she was editing at the

time. This chance encounter changed the course of Manoranjan Byapari's life and he was soon thrown into the spotlight. Manoranjan Byapari later received the Bangla Academy award for his contribution to Dalit Bangla literature.

Mahasweta Devi's taste for freedom can be proved through an incident that happened in Ranchi. In Birsa Munda Chowk in Ranchi, there was a statue of Birsa Munda that was in chains. Whenever Mahasweta Devi visited Ranchi, she remarked and wondered why the statue was in chains. The answer invariably was that Birsa Munda's photographs always depicted the tribal leader in chains and the photographs were the reference points for the sculptors when the statue was being made. Mahasweta Devi was never convinced by the explanation and she always demanded that the statue be unshackled. Just a year back, the statue was finally unshackled by the Jharkhand government. Although Mahasweta Devi passed away in 2016 and could not be a witness to the event, it was nevertheless a momentous occasion for the tribals living in Jharkhand. Mahasweta Devi's stories reflecting the subalterns is all the more relevant in today's world of intolerance where the voice of the minorities, subalterns and marginalised is often silenced. Mahasweta Devi effectively lent a voice to the people living in the most wretched conditions of the society through her novels and short stories and always dreamt of an egalitarian world.

Mahasweta Devi's activist mindset finds echo in Arundhati Roy, a much later novelist who found fame in the domain of Indian English writings. Her biographical details are to be studied in the next few paragraphs. The contemporary socio-cultural

factors that have influenced her writings also come under the purview of the discussion.

Arundhati Roy (Born 24th November 1961)

Arundhati Roy, a writer and activist, is best known for her Booker winning novel *The God of Small Things*. She is an advocate of human rights and issues related to the environment and ecology.

Arundhati Roy spent her childhood days in parts of Kerala and Ooty. She completed her education from Delhi. In the early phases of her career, Arundhati Roy worked for television shows. She also worked on a few documentaries. Her film *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones* won acclaim from far and wide. Her best seller *The God of Small Things* attracted rave reviews from critics and scholars from all over the world. *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times* and *Time* consider the novel to be path breaking. Although the book was denounced by the Indian government on charges of obscenity, the book touched upon various issues of social importance and hence, can be said to reflect the contemporary social space.

After the publication of *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy devoted herself entirely to social causes. She is a vehement critic of American capitalism and nuclear weapons. Her controversial stance on the Kashmiri separatists has often landed her in trouble with the Indian government. One of the projects where she campaigned was the Sardar Sarovar project in Gujarat. In this campaign, she was joined by Medha Patkar. Arundhati Roy felt that the construction of the dam will render hundreds of villagers

homeless. Hence, she demanded adequate compensation from the government to be paid to the villagers. The 'Narmada Bachao Andolan' was mainly spearheaded by Arundhati Roy. The novelist donated her royalties and prize winning money for the cause of the people who were displaced by the construction of the dam.

She strongly felt that the American foreign policies are erroneous. She criticised the Bush government for bombing Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks. Arundhati Roy felt that the bombing on Afghanistan is nothing but an act of terror. She strongly believes that a military offensive against terror can never be the solution. Instead, a military offensive will only aggravate matters and seem like another name for terror. In 2005, she participated in 'The World Tribunal on Iraq' and in the following year, she declared Bush to be a 'war criminal' when the latter visited India.

In the year 1999, she published a book called *The Cost of Living* where she criticised the policies of nuclear armament policies of the Indian government. She also protested against the various hydroelectric projects constructed in India because she felt that the constructions were a threat to the ecological balance of the region.

Arundhati Roy again came to the limelight in the year 2003 when she protested against the killings of members of the Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha by the then Kerala government. She met the farmers who were jailed as part of the movement and then, wrote a letter to the then Kerala Chief Minister denouncing his actions.

One aspect that needs to be mentioned of Arundhati Roy is that she never

perceived terrorism to be an isolated phenomenon. She felt that terror attacks are a result of the complex socio-political dynamics of the South Asian region, the partition of India, widespread poverty and lack of education. Hence, this outlook of hers is also reflected in her novel *The God of Small Things* where she focuses on the various social dynamics influence the narrative of the story. As part of her beliefs, she also supported the Naxalites fighting in central India. She claimed that the Naxals are actually fighting for the rights of the landless people while the government is busy protecting the interests of the mining companies since the region is very rich in mineral wealth. She has often criticised for her views on the Naxalite movement. Authors like Salman Rushdie and Tavleen Singh considered Roy's statements as hysterical rants.

In another protest march in support for Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Arundhati Roy was booked on sedition charges by the Indian government. She courted controversy when she criticised Anna Hazare for his support of the Lokpal bill. In the recent past, Arundhati Roy was seen protesting against the NRC and the NPR for which a police FIR was lodged against her. Thus, from all the activism in which she has participated, it can be inferred that she is anti-establishment. Arundhati Roy strongly condemns against hegemony of any kind. For her advocacy of non-violence, she was awarded the Sydney Peace prize in 2004. She was also featured in the *Time* in 2014 for being one of the 100 most influential people in the world. Her passion and enthusiasm have always been noticed by scholars and critics. Mithu C. Banerjee believes, "Roy's writing reflects her fiction, and meanders between polemic and sentiment. Yet, whether she is talking about the 'death of my world' or about 'one country's terrorist being another's freedom

fighter', she is always passionately intense" (Banerjee 20).

Since Arundhati Roy has always been passionate about social causes, the caste politics present in India has not escaped her attention. In *The God of Small Things*, we find caste politics playing a destructive role. Owing to the different dynamics of caste, Velutha is murdered. Arundhati Roy seems to convey the message that the police is not solely to be blamed. Other social factors such as caste politics are equally responsible for the murder. Roy herself mentioned time and again that caste politics in India is deterministic. Her description in the novel speaks volumes of the negative impact of caste on the social fabric.

As a young boy, Velutha would come with Vellya Paapen to the back entrance of the Ayemenem House to deliver the coconuts they had plucked from the trees in the compound. Pappachi would not allow Paravans into the house. Nobody would. They were not allowed to touch anything that Touchables touched. [. . .] Mammachi [. . .] could remember a time, in her girlhood, when Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's footprint. In Mammachi's time, Paravans, like other Untouchables, were not allowed to walk on public roads, not 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. (Roy 73-74)

The fact that Velllya and Velutha cannot use the front entrance of the house or the fact that they are asked not to use the public roads provide an insight into the horrific nature of suppression that lower caste people are subjected to. The fact that Comrade Pillai betrays Velutha because the latter belongs to a lower caste shows that the Naxalite leader who claims to dream of an egalitarian society is himself suspicious of people from other castes. Therefore, the hegemonic influences that the Naxals wish to remove are bound to be present because the Naxalites themselves are sectarian. It is because of their betrayal that Velutha loses his life. The novel is also critical of the Marxists of Kerala. Desai portrays the Marxists as people who lack integrity and often sell themselves to the capitalists.

As discussed before, Arundhati Roy has always been critical of the so called developments initiated by the capitalists in the rural regions of India. The gradual degradation of the environment because of the unplanned developmental activities has been brought forth by the novel. Arundhati Roy also suggests that the tourism industry has also played havoc with the village eco-system.

Years later, when Rahel returned to the river, it greeted her with a ghastly skull's smile ... Down river, a saltwater barrage had been built, in exchange for votes from the influential paddy-farmer lobby ... The view from the hotel was beautiful, but here too the water was thick and toxic. (Roy 124-125)

The river acts as the metaphorical social divide between the untouchables and the upper castes. For years, Velutha has crossed the river and it appears as if the river is now being punished for letting Velutha touch its water. It seems as if the pollution of the river is a punishment for allowing the lower castes to connect with the rest of the world. The river very well acts as the “connection between culture and nature” (Poyner 55).

The very title of the novel is significant. There is an interplay between small and big things. The word ‘God’ signifies magnanimity while ‘small’ is to be read literally. Velutha is the God of small things because he is a representative of the Dalits and the untouchables. There is also a metaphor that the novelist uses while describing Velutha. Just like the almighty creator, Velutha creates toys from dried palm reeds and gives them to Ammu. The affair between Velutha and Ammu transgresses the boundaries of class and caste and signals the beginning of a phase of misfortune. The novel projects love between two individuals positioned in the contexts of history, religion, politics set against the backdrop of Communism and the growing clout of globalisation that goes hand in hand with the Capitalists.

Arundhati Roy has repeatedly used the word ‘footprint’ in the novel. The word ‘footprint’ has gained significance in the novel because on the one hand, we find the mention of carbon footprints signalling pollution of the rural landscape. On the other hand, we find the footprint of a Dalit character like Velutha who is barred from the mainstream social events because of his castes. His footprint should not be seen anywhere signalling the tremendous amount of social ostracisation that Dalits and lower

caste people face in India.

The novel appears to convey the message that postcolonial subjects of poor countries like India are often the victims of racial subjugation. They are also the victims of unplanned globalisation that often results in the deprivation of food and amenities for the workers and farmers. The ever expanding hotel business mentioned in the novel is actually responsible for polluting the river but the social narrative indicates that characters like Velutha are the real pollutant which is absolutely not the case.

The novelist's activist mindset gets reflected in the novel when, in the narrative, Estha takes a stroll along the river that smells like shit. The continuous allegory to the geographical environment seems to encompass the social environment as well because relationships have been polluted as well, thanks to the oppressive social structure. Therefore, it can be said that the novel is partly an example of an eco-critical text. The fact that Velutha is not allowed to leave his footprints indicates that the Dalits are deprived of any voice. They are rendered voiceless, always dictated by the upper caste people living in the village. The character of Velutha was perhaps drawn from one of the hundreds of villagers who were protesting in real life against the Sardar Sarovar project. Arundhati Roy proves aptly that she is an activist writer who strongly believes that state power and globalisation are directly responsible for a gradually deteriorating ecological balance.

Like Arundhati Roy, V.S. Naipaul looked upon the state machinery as oppressive. V.S. Naipaul, was, in fact, more scathing in his descriptions of the unjust state policies

that have given birth to insurgent movements. Naipaul's own childhood, spent as a subaltern in the island nation of Trinidad, had a profound impact on his writing style. In the discussion that follows, V.S. Naipaul's life and his upbringing are to be examined and carefully analysed. The socio-economic factors that have motivated V.S. Naipaul will be assessed as well.

V. S. Naipaul (17th August 1932 - 11th August 2018)

Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul, famously known as V. S. Naipaul was an Indo-Trinidadian writer. His works are mainly set in the island nation of Trinidad. There are more than 30 books to his credit that have often courted controversy. Naipaul is said to be a keen observer of life and his works are mainly reflections of his perceptions of life. Naipaul won the Booker prize in the year 1971. Later, in the year 1990, he received a knighthood from Great Britain and in 2001, he received the Nobel Prize in literature.

Naipaul's ancestors had migrated to Trinidad to work as labourers in the sugarcane plantations in the country. Hence, Naipaul's writings are often reflections of the social injustices that the labourers had faced while working in Trinidad. We also find a certain degree of anti-establishment in Naipaul's writings.

Naipaul's schooling was from Port of Spain, Trinidad's capital city. Later, he went to the University of Oxford to pursue higher studies. While at Oxford, he suffered a nervous breakdown that forced him to undertake a trip to Spain. This impulsive trip to Spain eventually had a significant influence on Naipaul's writing career.

During the early phases of his career, Naipaul joined the BBC as a host. By then, he had permanently migrated to London and married Patricia Ann Hale, his classmate at Oxford. Naipaul began to host the BBC show called *Caribbean Voices* once a week. While hosting the show on BBC, Naipaul started writing stories which were later compiled and published as *Miguel Street*. The book reflected the pains of the Trinidadians and their daily struggles. Most of the stories were based on Naipaul's childhood memories of Port of Spain. *Miguel Street* was followed by a novel *The Mystic Masseur* that was published in 1955. A year later, Naipaul decided to visit Trinidad on a holiday. As aforementioned, Naipaul was a keen observer of life. While travelling in the ship, Naipaul's experiences with his fellow passengers on the ship inspired him to write *The Suffrage of Elvira*, a novella. V.S. Naipaul soon left his job at the BBC and became a book reviewer for *New Statesman*. Naipaul's famous novel *A House for Mr. Biswas* was mainly drawn from the childhood memories of his father Mr. Seepersad Naipaul. The protagonist in *A House for Mr. Biswas* Mohan Biswas works at different places and in different trades just like Naipaul's father. Mohan Biswas suffers extensively because of the colonial rule and the novel is a telling commentary on the colonial repression and injustice meted out to the colonised people.

Naipaul strongly believed that the West Indies was a barren land. Nothing creative was done there and the reason was the British colonial government. He felt that the colonial history was marked by a feature of brutality and complete disregard for human rights.

In 1962, Naipaul and his wife Pat came to India. Naipaul at once felt at ease, because he was not much identified in the country. Yet, Naipaul was appalled at the poverty and suffering that reigned supreme in the subcontinent. Naipaul was equally aghast at the government's apathy towards the ills that were plaguing the Indian society. It was during his stay in India that Naipaul wrote *An Area of Darkness*, again a scathing attack on the denial of human rights and the oppression meted out by the government. Brought out in the form of a travelogue, the book demonstrated Naipaul's encounter with people from a cross section of the society. His book exposed the corruption in the government machinery and the caste system present in the Indian society. However, an interesting aspect can be witnessed in this book. Naipaul has this ever present dilemma between the Indians' right of self determination and nostalgia for the British rule. After the publication of *An Area of Darkness* was published, Naipaul suffered a bout of writer's block. He soon found out that he could no longer identify himself with the Caribbean way of life, nor was he fully accepted by the British mainstream culture. His *Mr. Stone and the Knight's Companion*, the only book to be set in Britain with white British characters was still not a best seller.

The next major novel of Naipaul was *The Mimic Men*. This novel instantly made Naipaul famous. The novel was the fictional island of Isabella and the protagonist was named Ralph Singh, a politician of Indian origin. *The Mimic Men* had both fictional and non-fictional accounts and Naipaul deliberately made the narrative haphazard and ambiguous. Naipaul often uses the flashback technique of narration that throws light on the personal life of Ralph Singh. Through the character of Ralph Singh, Naipaul seems to

comment on the European society as looked upon by an Indian. The next major work of Naipaul known as *The Loss of El Dorado* is a commentary on the xenophobia and racist attacks that Asian immigrants faced from the colonialists in power. Naipaul had hoped that his *The Loss of El Dorado* would be a blockbuster in North America but that was not the case. The result was a phase of financial insecurity that the author faced. This forced him to think of migrating to Canada with his wife. But later, he abandoned his plans and instead, travelled around the African countries of Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and Congo. By now, Naipaul's interests have veered towards the political spheres and his journey through the African countries only reinforced his beliefs of social equality. *In a Free State*, published in 1971 reflected the experiences of Naipaul in Africa. Naipaul observes the many problems that the young African nations have while transitioning to power after having gained independence from the British and other colonial powers. The political chaos and the cultural turmoil that Naipaul witnessed firsthand influenced him to write *In a Free State*. There was also a generation gap that Naipaul witnessed while in Africa. The older generation of Africans was conservative in their outlook while the younger generation wanted more freedom and a more proactive say in governance. The result was a constant struggle of power. The colonialists who had stayed behind also had different allegiances. The younger generation of the whites saw the newly founded independences as opportunities to gain wealth and money while the older colonialists were more attached to their lands and hence, had a more empathetic outlook towards the native Africans. The novel received the Booker Prize in 1971 and immediately catapulted Naipaul to a level of commercial success. The prism through which Naipaul had observed

the African society was marked by a characteristic feature of dilemma and dichotomy. This dilemma is later seen in *Magic Seeds* as well, one of the chosen novels of the present research. The dilemma between what is right and what is wrong, the resistance movement, the government, the different prisms coloured by cultural contexts could be seen in a more matured manner in *Magic Seeds* in later years. Some critics have often observed that Naipaul has never portrayed the developing and the underdeveloped countries in a positive light. Naipaul's worldview is often coloured by a complete disregard of the third world's right to self-determination. Naipaul seems to nurture the view that the third world does not have the intellectual right and competence to rule. His romantic view of reality is characterised by contradictions in human behaviour. Nevertheless, Naipaul has been regarded by some other critics to have lent a voice to the subalterns who have been silenced by the colonial powers. In fact, his citation given by the Nobel Prize Committee mentions that Naipaul compels us to see the presence of suppressed histories.

Another section of critics considers Naipaul to be a neo-colonialist. His conflicting responses towards the colonial narratives found in works like *In a Free State* and *A Bend in the River* bears testimony to the fact. Many critics have often felt that Naipaul had a deep disliking for the native Africans. In fact, in certain portions of the aforementioned novels, Naipaul can be said to have favoured the Europeans and their colonial rule. Neo-colonialism can be said to be an extension of Colonialism while Postcolonialism advocates that colonialism still exists in a different form. Naipaul, therefore, can be said to have been a product of neo-colonialism. Naipaul's narration has

always been from the perspective of an outsider. *A Bend in the River* and *Magic Seeds* can be said to be recordings narrated by an outsider who could never familiarise himself with the demands of the indigenous society. At times, Naipaul seems to be a defender of the Western culture. Weiping Li feels that, “As an Indian intellectual who received western education, Naipaul showed his affiliation to the more liberal, civilized society rather than the barbarous and primitive third world” (Li 6). Naipaul seriously felt that third world countries like India and the African countries were so corrupt in their outlook that they hardly had the competence to govern. Thus, in *Magic Seeds*, we find the moral depravity of the revolutionaries as well as the absurdity of the government. In fact, the release of Willie Chandran from the Indian jail was triggered by the fact that Willie was a published author. This ridiculous logic behind the release of a condemned prisoner proves beyond doubt the kind of trust that Naipaul had for the Indian legal system. The fact that Willie eventually migrated to London to seek refuge and settle also proves Naipaul’s belief in the supremacy of the European cultures over their Asian or African counterparts. Naipaul appeared to believe that the Indian society and the resistance movements operating within it was doomed to be destroyed. This explains why the revolutionaries in *Magic Seeds* have been painted in such sordid light.

Some critics go to the extent that Naipaul believes sexuality to be a weapon used by the colonialists against the natives. His prejudice against women can be corroborated by his character sketches of Sarojini and Perdita who were close to non-entities. Sarojini’s encouraging Willie to go to India and join the revolutionaries appear to be very superficial and lacking any logic or rationale. Similarly, Perdita is a woman of low

morals who never hesitates to get involved with another man even while being married. In other stories too, Naipaul's thoughts about the indigenous women have been very negative. In *A Bend in the River*, African women have been painted as primitive, backward and mystical. The hopelessness of Africa was demonstrated on a micro level through the women characters of Naipaul. In *Magic Seeds*, there is no mention of any powerful female character. The characters are morally corrupt, lack emotional maturity and prudence.

Naipaul appears to have believed that gender oppression can never be reversed. Similarly, the social order that reflects injustice can hardly be rectified because the native system of governance is characterised by corruption and incompetence. Naipaul's narration in texts such as *A Bend in the River* and *Magic Seeds* do not favour giving a voice to the indigenous tribes. Instead, there is a marked presence of indignation of the indigenous cultures. Weiping Li ably sums up that Naipaul is an "outsider standing by neo-colonialism" (Li 11). One of the main differences between Mahasweta Devi and Naipaul can be cited in this context. Mahasweta Devi has always written from an insider's perspective even when she is describing the lives of the tribals while she herself belonged to the Bengali middle class. Mahasweta Devi, unlike Naipaul, has been considered to be one of the very few writers who have spoken in support of the indigenous cultures and tribes. Naipaul, on the contrary has subtly hinted at the cultural supremacy of the Europeans or the colonisers. Furthermore, his utter disregard for the ability of natives has only confirmed his position as an outsider. Nevertheless, his works reflect the horrific conditions that third world countries are often subjected to.

Unknowingly, Naipaul has also shown how the colonial powers have proved themselves to be instrumental in destroying and exploiting the social fabric of regions like India, the Caribbean and Africa.

Kiran Desai is to be studied next. Unlike V.S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai had lived a part of her childhood in India. Hence, her writings have been influenced by firsthand experiences. The similarity between V.S. Naipaul and Kiran Desai is that both the novelists have discussed insurgencies in the selected novels. Therefore, it is imperative to examine Kiran Desai's background in detail and how she got attracted towards a resistance movement like the Gorkhaland insurgency.

Kiran Desai (Born 3rd September, 1971)

Kiran Desai was born in Delhi. She is the daughter of the famous novelist Anita Desai. Until the age of 15, she stayed in India. Her initial years were spent in Kalimpong, India. Perhaps, her experiences in the hill station during her childhood provided her materials when she was writing *The Inheritance of Loss*. *The Inheritance of Loss* won the Booker prize in 2006.

After she turned 15, Kiran Desai migrated to the US where she completed her Master's degree from the Columbia University, New York. Desai's first novel was *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. The novel is about a man who works in a post office. After some years, the individual leaves his job at the post office started living on a guava tree. Since the man worked in the post office, he knew a lot of things about the villagers

from the letters that he delivered to the neighbourhood. He started claiming to the villagers that he is a visionary and he could read the lives of the men. The villagers believe him as some kind of a prophet and hail him as a hero. The debut novel of Kiran Desai won the Betty Trask Prize in 1998 for literary excellence.

After a gap of more than seven years, Kiran Desai published her second novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. The novel has two parallel narratives running along simultaneously. One narrative is set in Kalimpong where the retired judge Jemubhai Patel lives with his grand-daughter Sai. The second narrative describes the travels and travails of Biju, the son of the cook at Jemubhai's household. Biju has migrated to the US on forged papers and is now struggling for survival. He does odd jobs in the US and since, he is an illegal immigrant, he is subjected to every kind of humiliation and harassment. Through the character of Biju, Kiran Desai shows the underbelly of New York City. Immigrants from third world countries like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, etc. throng New York to eke out a living. But most of them have gone there illegally and so, the authorities are always after them. Seeing these vulnerable people, employers take full advantage of them and force them to do menial jobs and pay them amounts that are below the minimum wage. Furthermore, characters like Biju are also discriminated against because of their skin colour and their lack of fluency in English. To sum up, the illegal immigrants are living a life of hell in the US. Ironically, back in India, Biju's father, the cook spins stories of opulence and success about his son. The cook is often found exaggerating Biju's work so much so that Biju is described by him as a manager of a restaurant in New York. The father does not even have an inkling of what Biju does for a living in New York. Leave

alone being a manager, Biju sometimes works as a dishwasher, a waiter and at other times, he is unemployed. He has to share his rooms with other illegal immigrants like him who have come to live the American dream.

The parallel narrative that is set in Kalimpong centres on the retired judge Jemubhai Patel who was once employed by the British government as a magistrate. Jemubhai Patel is an anglophile and during his student days, he felt that the British society was an egalitarian one and no one would be discriminated against in Britain. However, when he secures a scholarship and sails to Britain, he found that the reality was exactly the opposite of what he had thought. He suffered because of racist attacks. He was humiliated because of his skin colour and accent. Kiran Desai while describing the vulnerability of young Jemu also focuses on the socio-economic conditions of India prevailing before 1947. During that time, the only way to gain social prestige was to migrate to the UK which was the centre of learning during the time. For an Indian village boy, migrating to London would greatly enhance the social prestige of the family in the village. Jemubhai too had this aspiration for upward mobility and so, wanted to abandon any characteristic trait that could identify him as an Indian. He tried to emulate the culinary etiquette of the British but still, he was discriminated against. After he returned to India and joined the British government, he became the proverbial 'other.' He was never accepted by his own countrymen because at the end of the day, he was an England returned judge. His English, his manners, his practices were very alien to the Indian ways of life. On the other hand, he was also not accepted by the British officials as one of their own because of his skin colour. He became the infamous 'brown sahib.' This

marginalisation of the judge continued even after he retired from service. We find him living in a decrepit house called Cho-Oyu in the forlorn town of Kalimpong. He does not have any visitors nor does he mix with the locals because he finds it below his dignity to mix with his neighbours or the Nepali speaking population who lives in the town. This marginalisation is found in the other characters as well. His grand-daughter Sai is also a marginalised character because she has been educated at a convent school. She cannot identify herself with the local kids because of her upbringing. After her parents die in an accident in Russia, Sai came to live with the retired judge. Both the characters never share a light moment together. Like the judge, Sai does not have any friend. The only companion of Sai is the cook who is employed in Jemubhai's house. As mentioned before, the cook is a master in spinning stories. He spins unrealistic tales about his son Biju. The tales invariably try to project Biju as some kind of a businessman. The cook also tries to spin fictional accounts of the judge's conjugal life. According to the cook, the judge and his now dead wife used to share a very cordial marital relationship. But contrary to what the cook said, the judge and his wife never shared a healthy conjugal life. The problem was that the judge's wife was an ordinary woman who could not speak English nor could she become proficient in the English ways and customs. As a result, Jemubhai thought that her wife's presence lowered his social status. He tried very hard to educate his wife but at the end, when he failed, he killed her. After his return from England, Jemubhai could never familiarise himself with his other Indian family members.

Other minor characters in the novel share similar experiences of cultural alienation. One thing is common in the novel and that is migration. The characters, both

major and minor, at some point in their lives, have made journey from one country to the other. This shift in the geographical space has accentuated their sense of isolation. A minor character in *The Inheritance of Loss* Father Booty is an example of reverse migration. He migrates to India from Europe but towards the end of the novel, the authorities find out that Father Booty's visa had expired long back. Therefore, Kiran Desai appears to suggest that it is not always the case that Indians are fascinated towards the West. The opposite also happens.

Apart from the family relationship depicted in the novel, there is the mention of the Gorkhaland insurgency that afflicted the districts of Darjeeling and Kalimpong in the 1980s. This insurgency triggers a number of events in the novel that eventually re-shapes human relationships. The robbery at the judge's house by the young Gorkhaland insurgents positions a serious question mark on the integrity of the insurgents. The militants who are very young does not seem to have any idea what they are doing. They are only interested in the hunting rifles that are there in the judge's house. They fumble while committing the robbery and at times, they even run the risk of getting caught. The incident also highlights the shoddy law and order situation in the town. The narrative clearly proves that the police are incompetent in handling the situation. The Gorkhaland insurgency also creates a social divide and the trust that characterised the relationships between the Nepalis and the people from the plains was lost. Towards the end of the narrative, we find that Biju is ultimately forced to return from the US. When he reaches Kalimpong, he is robbed by the insurgents. Biju had brought many material possessions from the US but unfortunately, all his belongings are taken away by the insurgents.

Therefore, it can be said that although the Gorkhaland insurgents claim to support the subalterns, Biju is not spared even though he is a poor man who was returning home. The cultural hegemony that the Gorkhaland insurgents were fighting against ironically was practised by them as well. They robbed people and created an atmosphere of terror, thereby, depriving the poor people of their livelihood.

The novel's beauty lies in the use of metaphors. Towards the end of the narrative, Biju, after getting robbed by the insurgents, is reunited with his father. Kiran Desai seems to suggest that human relationships are precious and should not be dependent on the expectations of material resources. Thus, the poignant reunion of the father and son is shown without the presence of any material objects. Like Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084*, *The Inheritance of Loss* too ends with possibilities. There is a possibility that the judge's lost dog Mutt will return. There is a possibility that Sai will win back her lost love. Lastly, there is always the possibility that the cook and his son will finally live together in a space that is honest and without any fake expectations or exaggerated tales of material success.

The youngest female writer to win the Booker, Kiran Desai, in her novel, describes the ill effects of globalisation and how it has contributed to the rise of exploitation. This exploitation in turn has given birth to various insurgencies like the Gorkhaland movement. There is a very close similarity between her outlook and Arundhati Roy's. Both believe that insurgencies should not be viewed as isolated incidents. On the contrary, there are many socio-cultural factors that contribute to the

grievances of people. The irony is even after the rise of such militant groups which claim to fight for the rights of the subalterns, the hegemonic influences continue. The militant groups exert the same hegemony on the community and things never really change on the ground. Just like the Naxalite's leader's betrayal that led to the killing of Velutha, in *The Inheritance of Loss*, the Gorkhaland insurgents act against the economically weaker section of the population. The novel is certainly a product of the postcolonial period because it closely examines human relationships in the light of cultural constructs that have come up because of colonisation.

The setting of Kalimpong in *The Inheritance of Loss* is significant. One reason, as already mentioned, is that Kiran Desai spent part of her childhood in the Himalayan town. Kalimpong situated near the international borders of Nepal, Bhutan and China is also a melting pot of cultures. Furthermore, with the influx of Tibetan refugees from Tibet, the town is a potpourri of various cultural traits. Kiran Desai has often said that she writes on the basis of her own experiences and whatever she has seen in her life. Her own multicultural background can be said to have provided her with a cosmopolitan outlook that is reflected in her works. Her mother Anita Desai was the child of a Bengali father and German mother. In fact, it is said that German was spoken at home while the family conversed in Hindi with their friends. Thus, multicultural traits were already there in the Desai family when Kiran was born.

Critics suggest that Kiran Desai's writings reflect the characteristics of her mother Anita Desai, Salman Rushdie and R.K. Narayan. Indeed, R.K. Narayan's graphic

descriptions of South India, especially Malgudi, a fictional town, have certainly influenced Kiran Desai. Her descriptions of Kalimpong and New York simultaneously are detailed and describe the cities minutely. The novelist is a keen observer of life and the social surroundings of the geographical spaces that find mention in *The Inheritance of Loss*. Arnab Mitra believes, “that she gets great joy and greater excitement trying to explore things she doesn't know. Both her books started with the kernel of an idea and just grew as she wrote and literally ‘lived’ through the events she described” (Mitra 196). Mitra further says that Kiran Desai does not follow the rules or methods that are usually in the curricula of writers’ workshops or events. In that way, Kiran Desai is an extraordinary writer. Kiran Desai also dedicates her success to her mother who is an acclaimed author herself and who was nominated for the Booker thrice. Kiran Desai feels that her mother provided her the much needed emotional support that ultimately propelled the former’s writing career. Louise Jury believes that her mother’s experiences shaped the thought process of Kiran Desai as well.

Anita's work examines themes of foreignness and division which some commentators believe stems from observing the anxiety her own mother experienced about the situation in wartime Germany, a country to which she never returned.

They are themes Kiran has, arguably, inherited. The plot of *The Inheritance of Loss* tells the parallel stories of a family in the foothills of the Himalayas and of illegal immigrant workers in New York. And

she has described her own sense of alienation from America even though it is her main home. (She also lives in New Delhi.) “I think it has been a very difficult time in America to be an immigrant and a foreigner, to be part of the non-Western world,” she said on Tuesday night. (Jury 22)

This sense of alienation perhaps compelled Kiran Desai to focus on the other factors that have led towards globalisation and its ill effects that have afflicted the people coming from developing nations like India. Desai herself comments that she always wanted to touch upon the contentious issues of nation and nationhood and the shadow lines of international borders that have separated people for long. Rashmee Roshan Lall in engaging article published in *The Times of India* comments, “Desai’s unpretentious manner of dress and demeanour and her apparent unwillingness to assume a ‘confused desi dolly-bird’ persona spoke volumes for her clarity of thought about the much-hyped virtues of hybridity and self-surrender to an adopted land” (Rashmee).

Rashmee Roshan Lall further comments that Desai has “dealt with almost every contemporary international issue, including globalisation, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence” (Rashmee) in *The Inheritance of Loss*. In fact, the novelist has tried to capture the emotional turmoil of the characters who have travelled from one place to another and negotiated multiple cultural terrains. Thus, her narrative has somewhat challenged globalisation because according to her, globalisation also leads to losses and this loss trickles down to subsequent generations. The younger

generation inherits the loss and becomes unwittingly, victims of an increasingly cruel world that thrives on maintaining a hegemonic influence on the subalterns.

Like Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri has strong roots in India. Hence, Jhumpa Lahiri's forte has largely been the Indian diaspora in the US. It is necessary to analyse Jhumpa Lahiri's family background, her education and her experiences that have propelled her into writing the novel *The Lowland*, one of the chosen novels in the present research.

Jhumpa Lahiri (Born 11th July, 1967)

Jhumpa Lahiri is an Indian English writer who writes in English. Of late, she has been writing in Italian as well. She lives in the US. Her collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1999. *Interpreter of Maladies* also won the O. Henry award for literary excellence and the PEN/Hemingway award for the best debut literary work. Her short stories mainly describe the anxieties of characters who have migrated, mainly to the US. These characters suffer from a cultural alienation and isolation in the host social space. The stories in the *Interpreter of Maladies* describe the diasporic crisis and conflicts of cultures spanning countries more than one.

Jhumpa Lahiri herself is the product of multicultural spaces. She was born in London and her parents were from the state of West Bengal in India. Her parents migrated to the US when she was only three years old. She had relatives in Kolkata and her parents often visited Kolkata bringing their daughter along with them. Thus, it can be

seen that Jhumpa Lahiri was already negotiating multiple cultures when she was a kid. Her own immigrant experience started to shape her thought process and she began to write about people she saw around her immediate family spaces, people who wanted to live the American dream. These people almost always wanted to build a mini Bengali community of their own by practising Bengali songs, rituals, poetry sessions and other common practices. Their existence was never entirely American. Yet, in some respects, they emulated the American culture. In their workplaces, they could never be identified as Bengalis, leave alone Indians. Thus, these people were often defined as hybrids because they encompassed streaks of both cultures – Indian and American.

One thing that should be considered in Jhumpa Lahiri's writings is that there have always been generational differences among the immigrant Indians. It is natural that children born of Indian immigrant parents became naturalised citizens of the US since the parents were living there. These kids never saw India or experienced anything that could be identified as Indian. Right from their birth, they witnessed the American culture and the way of life there. They had American friends, were taught in American schools and could speak English in an American accent fluently. Contrary to this generation, the parents who had spent half of their lives in India still had their roots in India. They visited India every year, celebrated Durga Puja, Diwali and other Indian festivals. Since they were taught in Indian schools, their accents were always Indian. They also had an apparent dislike for the American liberal culture which is quite the opposite of what the Indian cultural ethos practise. All these nuances find place in Jhumpa Lahiri's writings.

Jhumpa Lahiri's father worked as a librarian in Rhode Island, US. The young Jhumpa was admitted to a nearby kindergarten school where she stood out because of her name. 'Jhumpa' is a typical Bengali name which can never be passed off as American or European. So, from a very young age, Jhumpa Lahiri realised out how one's name could aggravate the existential and diasporic crisis of an individual. Her realisation later inspired her to write her debut novel *The Namesake* where a second generation Indian immigrant Gogol faces an existential crisis because of his name. 'Gogol' named after the famous Russian author could not gel with the mainstream American society because of his name.

Jhumpa Lahiri completed her education from Columbia University and Boston University where from she pursued an M.A. and a Ph.D.. Her diasporic experiences have become more intense by now and she could clearly see how cultural spaces varied and how it is very difficult to negotiate the cultural spaces. She also found how family relationships re-evolved over a course of time in an individual's life. Her collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies* therefore, records conjugal differences, love affairs, abusive relationships, etc. The Indian-American experience coupled with a hostile immigrant experience played havoc with the psyche of the characters.

Jhumpa Lahiri had always been interested in human relationships and how they have the ability to form and re-form during a course of time. Her relationship with her own mother finds mention in a few non-fictional writings such as *Cooking Lessons* where she narrates her culinary experiences with her mother. It is significant to note that food

forms an important part of a cultural space. When an individual migrates to a foreign country, s/he prefers to eat the food that is eaten by people in the home country. On the other hand, the second generation immigrant Indians who were born in the US have a very different taste bud. They do not have any knack for Indian food, unlike their parents. Jhumpa Lahiri too felt the same and hence, she wrote *Cooking Lessons* that was later published in *The New Yorker* magazine along with some of her fictions. In another short story *The Boundary* that was published by *The New Yorker* magazine in 2018, Jhumpa Lahiri compared and contrasted the practices of two immigrant families.

Of late, Jhumpa Lahiri has taken a liking for Italian and started writing in the language. Her first novel in Italian *Dove Mi Trovo* was published in 2019. She also edited a collection of short stories by Italian writers that was later published by Penguin. Thus, from the above discussion, it can be fairly witnessed that Jhumpa Lahiri has lived in several cultural spaces and thus, carries characteristics of a pluralised individual living in a cosmopolitan world. Unlike Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri does not indulge activism. She has very little interest in ecological concerns as well. Her forte is family and that too, when positioned in a diasporic space. Her collection of short stories, *Unaccustomed Earth*, is thematically similar to *Interpreter of Maladies*. The short stories reflect the stress and strains of human relationships. The first generation Indian immigrants to the US have always felt an affinity to maintain a community of their own. We find a character like Mr. Pirzada in *Interpreter of Maladies* wearing two watches, one set at the American time while the other is set at the Bangladesh time. These subtle references point towards the yearning of the immigrants to return home. Yet, their desire for upward social mobility

can only be achieved if they remain in the US. Thus, they are trapped in a vicious cycle from where they cannot escape.

In *The Lowland* that was published in 2013, Jhumpa Lahiri is at her best depicting human relationships. However, *The Lowland* is perhaps her first work where she has used a political movement as a backdrop to her narrative. The novel narrates the story of a family who lives in the Kolkata suburb of Tollygunje. The area is a marshy land, literally, a lowland where survival is not easy. Lahiri deliberately chooses the setting to depict the turmoil in the geographical space that gets reflected within the relationships as well. This will to live and survive can be found in all the characters of *The Lowland*. The story, set in the 1960s and 70s of Kolkata narrates the story of Udayan and Subhash who were bright students. However, Subhashh migrates to the US for his graduate studies while Udayan is involved with the Naxalites. Eventually, he becomes an active member of the Naxalite party and figures in the police's wanted list. Udayan is killed one day by the police and this incident laves a deep impact on the family. Here we find a similarity between *Mother of 1084* and *The Lowland* because both the novels depict the transformation of characters that happened because of the killing of one of the protagonists. Of course, the protagonists are killed because of their Naxal affiliation. *The Lowland* is a more intricate plot because apart from the Naxalite angle, we find the characters trying hard to negotiate the different geographical terrains of the US and India.

After Udayan's death, Subhash offers to marry Gauri, Udayan's widow. Gauri accepts the proposal and moves to the US with Subhash as his wife. This is significant

because the incident reflects the social constructs of the time. Since Udayan was known as a Naxalite, the family already was ostracised by the neighbourhood. Being a widow of a Naxalite brings in all the more stigma. This stigmatisation of being a widow forces Subhash to offer marriage to Gauri and bring her to the US where she can leave her past behind and start life anew. However, after her arrival to the US, Gauri undergoes a process of self-realisation just like Sujata in *Mother of 1084*. Gauri pursues higher studies in the US and spares very little time for her husband and daughter that eventually takes a toll on the conjugal relationship. It is very difficult to decide whether Gauri's actions can be supported. It has also to be taken into account that Gauri had suffered a lot while in India. Becoming a widow at such a young age indeed forced Gauri to face the hardships of life. After coming to the US, she re-discovers herself and her inclination for higher studies. Therefore, it can also be said that the novel offers an insight into the complex dynamics of identities and identity politics. Jennifer Marquardt believes that "The novel provides a compassionate and complex examination of identities that are defined by loss as well as the reconstruction that can - or cannot - take place after" (Marquardt 2). The turbulence of relationships continues in the novel. When Gauri's daughter Bela grows up, Subhashh tells her that her biological father is actually Udayan who was killed by the police for being a Naxalite. Bela does not wish to remain in contact with Gauri, because the former feels that Gauri had failed as a mother. This takes a toll on Gauri who decides to visit Kolkata after many years. When Gauri finally reaches the lowland of Tollygunje where her former husband Udayan was killed, she finds that the lowland has disappeared and in its place, skyscrapers and shopping malls have come up. The Naxalite movement

too has subsided by now. She feels a tremendous amount of guilt and decides to commit suicide but at the last moment, she decides to return to the US. The fact that she does not belong to Kolkata, her birthplace, any more is characteristic of the other diasporic novels of Jhumpa Lahiri.

Unlike the other novels, what sets apart *The Lowland* is the political angle. Jhumpa Lahiri comments on the abysmal state policies that ultimately gave birth to the Naxal movement. The way Udayan is killed by the police speaks volumes about the police atrocities that were committed during the period. Furthermore, Jhumpa Lahiri, unlike Mahasweta Devi, is no sympathiser of the Naxalites. She narrates how the movement was losing its track and how the Naxal cadres were misguided. Owing to Udayan's wrong decisions, the family paid a price. In fact, during Udayan's last moments, he realises his folly and feels that things could have been handled in a better way.

Jhumpa Lahiri also comments how the Naxalites were no less atrocious than the state machinery. The grisly details when Udayan kills a police officer while the latter is on his way to the school to pick up his son reflects the cowardice of the Naxals.

He'd known from the beginning the risk of what he was doing. But only the policemen's blood had prepared him. That blood had not belonged only to the police officer, it had become a part of Udayan also. So that he'd felt his own life begin to ebb, irrevocably, as the policeman lay dying in the alley. Since then he'd waited for his own blood to spill. (Lahiri 412)

The Naxals, led by Udayan, deliberately chooses the time because the officer will not be armed on his way to the school. After killing the police officer, Udayan dips his hand in the blood of the victim and signs the initials of his party. This gross violation of human rights again reflects how the Naxalites are themselves involved in the atrocities, thereby, unknowingly continuing the hegemony that they are fighting against. Lisa Moore observes, “Lahiri gives us a provoking and affecting meditation on family and loss, the idealism of youth and how it can be volatile, manipulated and ultimately crushed” (Moore 1). This can be corroborated by the fact that when a character named Dipankar interviews Gauri on her take about the Naxalite movement, Gauri replies that there was no leadership that could guide the cadres. Also, the lack of coordination forced the movement to fail. Thus, Jhumpa Lahiri’s novel can be said to be a critique of human relationships and the political dynamics of the Naxalite movement. Her tone is somewhat critical, similar to that of Naipaul’s *Magic Seeds*. However, she is more interested in depicting human relationships that have been re-shaped by diasporic crisis and insurgencies such as the Naxalite movement.

The last novelist who comes up for discussion is Neel Mukherjee. Like Jhumpa Lahiri, Neel Mukherjee is interested in examining the Naxalite movement that had rocked Calcutta in the previous century. Neel Mukherjee’s education, his upbringing and his background need to be scrutinized in order to understand the novelist’s perception of the socio-economic and political scenario of contemporary Bengal.

Neel Mukherjee (Born 1970)

Neel Mukherjee is an Indian English writer based in London. He is the author of a few novels that have won rave reviews from across the world. His first novel *A Life Apart* is set in India and England. It was published in the UK in 2010. This novel was previously published as *Past Continuous* in 2008 in India. *Past Continuous* won the Vodafone-Crossword award. His next novel *The Lives of Others* was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in the year 2014. In 2017, Mukherjee published another novel *A State of Freedom*. Recently, he has also been elected as a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, UK.

Neel Mukherjee's schooling was from Don Bosco, Kolkata. Thereafter, he completed his Bachelor's degree from Jadavpur University, Kolkata. He went to the UK on a Rhodes scholarship and completed his Master's degree and Ph.D. from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge respectively. He also holds a degree in Creative Writing from the University of East Anglia.

Mukherjee's first novel *A Life Apart* is a novel about the changing dynamics of the world. The protagonist Ritwik Ghosh migrates to the University of Oxford but he is still tied to Bengal through memories and nostalgia. Ritwik Ghosh is also an aspiring writer. Therefore, part of the novel can be said to have biographical elements. However, with the passage of time, Ritwik slowly finds himself involved in the world of crime. Thematically, there are some striking similarities between Rabindranath Tagore's *The Home and the World* and *A Life Apart*. Just like the character of Miss Gilby in *The Home and the World*, Ritwik Ghosh too is an advocate of education. While Miss Gilby teaches

English in pre-independent India, Both the characters struggle to find a toehold in their host societies and both are alienated within their own social spaces. *A Life Apart* is a transnational novel that highlights the disparate cultural trajectories of different social spaces.

His novel *The Lives of Others*, set in Kolkata in 1967 narrates the story of Supratik who has become an active member of the Naxalite Party. Supratik's family is a typically middle class one. His family belongs to the class against which Supratik protests. Like some other novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Rohinton Mistry, *The Lives of Others* combines the nuances of family relationships set against a turbulent political atmosphere. The three generations of the Ghosh family which is depicted in the novel demonstrate varying belief systems and can be said to be a reflection of the Bengali cultural space on a micro level. The novel certainly shows how the Bengal society of the 1960s was deeply caste ridden. The characters have their own eccentricities and they unknowingly provide the readers a picture of the middle class society of Bengal that was averse to any kind of change. In fact, the protagonist Supratik breaks himself free from this shackle and joins the ranks of the Naxals. Thus, Supratik's actions act as a foil to the other characters of the novel. However, the novelist does not paint the character of Supratik in plain black and white. In fact, through the characters of Supratik, the novelist shows the functioning of the Naxalites and how the movement had a devastating impact on the family structure of the Bengali society. In this manner, Neel Mukherjee is very similar to Mahasweta Devi and Jhumpa Lahiri. Both Devi and Lahiri have shown in their respective novels, *Mother of 1084* and *The Lowland* how family relationships suffered

because of the Naxal revolution that had hit Bengal in the 1960s and 70s. *The Lives of Others* shows how the poor peasants of Bengal are rarely given a voice. The contradictions and contrasts within the Bengali middle class society are amply reflected in the novel. In fact, it can be said that *The Lives of Others* offers a bourgeois perception of a revolution that was initiated by the landless peasants of Naxalbari.

The noted social scientist Ranajit Guha once remarked that “the history of agrarian disturbances in the subcontinent was endemic in nature and was as old as colonialism itself” (Beretta 66). Guha believes that the Naxalite revolution was unique in the sense that it aimed to unify the landless farmers, the unemployed youths and members of the Bengali middle class. This implied that the revolution was characterised by the different dialectics of the society that was prevalent in Bengal during the time. Although the movement started as an agrarian revolt, it slowly acquired a politically Marxist colour and started focusing on annihilation of the class enemy. Interestingly, there were several agendas at play. As aforementioned, the revolt started on an agrarian note because it highlighted the sufferings of the landless farmers and their protests against the landlords of Bengal. Slowly, it spread to the cities and towns of Bengal and influenced the youths who were aggrieved at state policies that were largely believed to be responsible for unemployment. Therefore, this shift from the landless farmers to the unemployed youths is something that makes the Naxalite revolt one of its kind. This variation in the agenda was also responsible for the dilemmas and dichotomies that often affected the cadres of the revolution. A case in point is Supratik Ghosh who fights against his own family which owns land and can be typically identified as bourgeoisie. Supratik, on the one

hand, cannot identify himself to be belonging to the farming class. On the other hand, he identifies himself to be associated with the Naxal Party because somewhere, he suffers from the anguish of unemployment and identity crisis that was a result of faulty state policies and rules.

It can be said that Neel Mukherjee has redefined the word ‘subaltern’ in the novel *The Lives of Others*. The novel reflects both the sufferings of the farmers and striking workers of factories in Kolkata. Hence, Mukherjee successfully chronicles the growing purview of the movement that threatens to engulf the entire Bengali social space. The servants, porters, workers, farmers all come under one roof. In fact, Supratik Ghosh, himself a member of the Ghosh family is neither a farmer nor a worker. Yet, he too becomes a subaltern because he cannot identify himself with the belief systems propagated by the Ghosh family. Thus, ‘subaltern’ has acquired a new dimension in the novel.

The Ghosh family suffers from the ill effects of the governmental policies that were in practice during the time. Thanks to the economic recession, the paper mill business of the Ghosh family suffers and the family’s fortunes start to decline. This worsens matters within the family since there is always a fight regarding wealth, the family traditions, prestige, reputation, etc. The older generation tries to retain the grandeur of the family but they very well know the economic downturn that had affected almost every Bengali household of the time. Younger generations of the family like Supratik know that the exploitative nature of the capitalist families like the Ghoshs’ is

responsible for the decline. Furthermore, the class and caste division of Bengal during the time was a matter of great concern. The different storeys of the Ghosh mansion in Kolkata reflected the hierarchy of castes of Bengal albeit on a micro scale.

A patriarch like Prafullanath dictates the order in the Ghosh household and everyone is supposed to follow that. In fact, the rooms are allotted according to the social standing of the different members of the Ghosh household. It appears as if Prafullanath is a metaphorical representation of the government and the social masters of the time. It is because of these policies that harmony suffers and there is growing animosity among the different family members – similar to the Bengali social space that was ridden with conflicting interests of the different classes of people.

One of the characters Somnath is a rapist who is often caught by the police on immoral grounds. Another character Adinath is an alcoholic while his son Suranjan is a drug addict. Other characters in the family have criminal tendencies as well. It is against these traits that Supratik revolts. The moral decay that has set in within the Ghosh family is part of the larger social, political crisis that had gripped Bengal in the 1960s and 70s. The charged political atmosphere that had gripped Bengal during this period is reflected by incidents like that of the running over of some workers of the paper mill who had gheraoed Prafullanath's car.

The middle class was in the grip of a crisis and *The Lives of Others* is a commentary on that. It could no longer sustain the social fabric and there was an increasing amount of tension between the middle and the lower classes which was

represented by the factory workers and farmers.

Ironically, Supratik finds it very difficult to adjust physically to the demands of the Naxalite movement. Since he was raised as a middle class kid, he enjoyed all the comforts of the bourgeoisie. However, when he joins the students' union at Presidency College and subsequently, becomes a member of the Naxalite party, things turn upside down for Supratik. He realises that the gap between the poor and the middle class is difficult to bridge and it actually represents the deep sense of distrust that had set in between the two classes in Bengal. In this aspect, the character of Supratik is similar to the character of Willie Chandran in Naipaul's *Magic Seeds*. Chandran too realised that the gap between his beliefs and that of the rebels was too wide to be bridged. Thus, Willie started feeling an existential crisis, the moment he joined the ranks of the revolutionaries. It might a little difficult to understand the meaning of 'others' in the title *The Lives of Others* because the 'other' can refer to Supratik Ghosh, an alienated individual who could never identify himself with the beliefs of the Ghosh family. The 'other' can also refer to the marginalised workers and farmers who were deprived of justice in Bengal because of the erroneous policies of the state.

Carlotta Beretta believes that unlike Supratik in *The Lives of Others*, Bratiin *Mother of 1084* by Mahasweta Devi could easily familiarise and identify himself with the Naxalite although both the young men were members of the middle class of Bengal. Both the novels are approximately set within the same time frame although Mahasweta Devi happens to be much senior to Neel Mukherjee (Beretta 74). The interesting part is that

Brati's mother Sujata experiences a kind of alienation similar to that of Supratik's. In *Mother of 1084*, Sujata gradually separates herself from her husband after discovering his philandering ways. She also finds that ideologically she has drifted from the other members of the family. The same happens with Supratik who finds himself all alone although, family wise he is a part of the wealthy Ghosh household. However, there are differences as well. On the one hand, Mahasweta Devi believes the Naxalite movement failed largely because the intellectuals never took part actively in the movement. She however, was of the belief that the Naxalites were really concerned about the conditions of the poor and the state was largely responsible for the brutal subjugation and at times, deaths of the young revolutionaries. Neel Mukherjee, on the other hand, points out the ambiguities present in the ideals of the Naxal revolutionaries.

There was also an element of generational difference that can be seen in both the novels of *Mother of 1084* and *The Lives of Others*. Both the characters of Dibyanath and Adinath seem to uphold the importance of maintaining their image and appearance, at times, even at the cost of honesty, integrity and transparency. Dibyanath, in *Mother of 1084*, is too concerned lest his name figures in the public space because his son is a known Naxalite. Adinath too admonishes Supratik for being callous and apathetic to the middle class upbringing that he has been subjected to.

As already mentioned, Neel Mukherjee has incorporated an element of ambiguity in the novel that compels the reader to cast doubt on the integrity of the Naxalites. Towards the end of the novel, Supratik steals some jewels from the Ghosh household. As

a result of Supratik's act, the blame falls on Madan, a servant of the Ghosh family. It appears as if Supratik did this deliberately because it is much more convincing to pin the blame on a servant because, as already stated before, there was a deep sense of mistrust running between the middle class and the servant class or the proletariat. The novelist himself comments,

Did he... did he go down that route because of reasons of class, because a servant stealing is so much more credible, so much more natural, than a member of the family? Was it to make the theft believable to the police that he had framed Madan-da, or was it because it had cost less to betray a servant than one's own kind? (Mukherjee 478)

There are other instances in the novel where the Naxalites have proved that their integrity is not always up to the mark. After Supratik's death, there is the description of Supratik's comrades trying to construct a bomb that will be used to derail a passenger train. In fact, this incident is a direct reference to the Gnaneswari Express tragedy that occurred in Bengal in 2010. It was alleged that Maoist cadres were behind the accident of the train that claimed hundreds of lives. The novelist seems to suggest that it was the only legacy that Supratik had left for the future members of the organisation after his death. There is also a metaphor at play here. The derailment of the train because of the bomb attack symbolises the derailment of the Naxal movement. Therefore, it can be told beyond doubt that the novelist wanted to draw the reader's attention to the vices that had

crept inside the Naxalite Party. This advocacy of destruction seems to be the root cause of all evils.

Neel Mukherjee appears to emphasise that the Naxalite movement failed because of a social divide both within the social space and the family space. The increasing rift between the ideological spaces of the different classes worsened matters. The subalterns are not really given a platform to vent their anger in *The Lives of Others*. Instead, the novel provides an insight into the anguish of Supratik who becomes an 'other' in the Ghosh household.

Neel Mukherjee's next novel *A State of Freedom* is a compilation of five stories and is an experiment in form. In Mukherjee's own words, the form can be called 'Trojan Horse realism'. Mukherjee wanted to use a new form of realism that will not solely depend on the plot or character or the narrative. In *A State of Freedom*, Neel Mukherjee seems to emphasise human relationships and how relationships can act as the site of refuge in an increasingly intolerant and cruel world. In this aspect, the novel's thematic message can be said to be similar to Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*. At the end of Desai's novel, we find the reunion of Biju and his father, the cook. After a series of loss and trauma, Biju finally manages to reach home in Kalimpong and gets to meet his father. The fact that Biju is stripped of all his material wealth that he had brought from the U.S.A. and he gets to meet his father in a semi naked state reflects how relationships should be without the glitter of material wealth. The backdrop of the golden Kanchenjunga reflects the surreal and divine presence of nature that seems to

corroborate the filial relationship of father and son. Thus, both Desai and Mukherjee seem to believe that human relationships can still be pure and therapeutic in this age of hypocrisy and bigotry. To sum up, it can be said that Neel Mukherjee excels in highlighting conflicts and contradictions that characterise a particular social space.

The outcome of this chapter can be summed up as follows. There is a very inherent relationship between the author's personal experiences and the way s/he presents her characters in the respective novels. The authorial stances may vary and the variance may be attributed to the perception of the author that has been moulded by life's experiences. The following chapter titled 'Base and Superstructure' discusses the Marxian concepts of Base and Superstructure and how all the selected works operate within the overlapping spaces of Base and Superstructure. In addition to the writer's own experience, it is important to analyse the different reactions of the characters to various circumstances in the light of Base and Superstructure. The chapter makes a textual analysis of the characters caught in the vortex of Base and at times, they become an agency of repression. It also happens that some of the characters are victims of the forces that are at play within the Superstructure. The following chapter addresses the concerns that come out of the selected novels in the light of the analysis of Base and Superstructure.

Chapter: Two

Base and Superstructure

Marxist scholars believe that society consists of two sections, namely, Base and Superstructure. Some scholars define Base as sub-structure as well. The Base indicates the modes of production that include the forces and relations of production. In other words, the relations of production imply the employer-employee relation, the dynamics between them and the division of labour that forms an inherent part of the modern industrial system. The Base refers to the space where people enter to produce the necessities or the amenities of life. The Superstructure, on the other hand, refers to the society's other relationship structures that are directly related to the production. It may refer to the different cultural constructs, the religions, the various political structures, roles, media, educational institutions and the state. In any given point of time, the influence of the Base is more than the Superstructure. Furthermore, the Superstructure can affect the Base.

The civil society has been defined by Marx as the economic Base. The political class forms the political Superstructure. Later scholars have defined Base as the entire gamut of productive relationships, not just restricted within the economic limits. The Superstructure is a variable entity and it may develop in an arbitrary manner in different social spaces, for example, art, politics, economics, etc.

In Marxist theory, the ‘base’ refers to the economic foundation of the society while the ‘superstructure’ refers to the cultural, ideological and institutional aspects that arise from the ‘base’. The base refers to the relations and means of production while the superstructure represents the other aspects of the society that are not directly related to production. Superstructure is influenced by the economic base and is intended to maintain the social order. The relationship between base and superstructure is dialectical. Marx stated that changes in the economic foundation can transform the cultural and ideological aspects of the society. Marx argued that these changes were primarily brought into the social space when the society transitioned from feudalism to capitalism. Therefore, conflicts arising in the social space may be analysed through the prism of base and superstructure. The conflicts that Marx had mentioned can be found in the six novels that the present research addresses. In *Mother of 1084*, it can be seen how Brati Chatterjee protests against the social order. In the novel, he represents the disgruntled youths who were not satisfied with the pretentious social class that was represented by his father. Mahasweta Devi shows in her novel how culture is framed by the people who hold capital in their hands. Devi comments, “Brati was a worse criminal than them. Because he had lost faith in this society ruled by profit-mad businessmen and leaders blinded by self-interest” (Devi 19). The dominant ideology is influenced by the powerful people in the social order who dictate what is right and what is wrong. Similarly, in *The God of Small Things*, Ammu is always at the receiving end because she is a woman and does not hold the hegemonic dominance that her brother wields in the social space. Velutha, a marginalised individual is mocked at by the mainstream society because he is poor.

Velutha is arrested on false charges. “The Kottayam Police had acted on the basis of an FIR filed by her. The Paravan had been caught. Unfortunately, he had been badly injured in the encounter and in all likelihood, would not live through the night” (Roy 314). Arundhati Roy highlights how the police acts at the behest of certain sections of the society.

In *Magic Seeds*, Willie Chandran aspires to change the society but he soon realises that the revolutionaries follow misguided ideals. They themselves dominate the poor villagers and often prove to be exploitative. They try to impose an ideal that has no connection with the masses. The revolutionaries try to control the factors of production and in the process, they form a space of ideology that is devoid of any humanitarian aspect. Willie understands that he is lost. He thought, “Now I am truly lost. In every way. I don’t know what lies ahead or behind. My only cause now is to survive, to get out of this” (Naipaul 125). Willie knows that his fellow revolutionaries are actually enemies of the villagers and are intent upon imposing a hegemonic space that is exploitative in nature.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, we see when the retired judge goes to England to pursue his higher studies, he realises that the British hold the economic privilege and so, they influence social institutions such as the Church, universities and other social entities. Jemubhai tries to emulate them but fails to be a part of the British social space. Jemubhai’s departure is marked by a grand send off. “The future judge ... had been serenaded by at his departure by two retired members of a military band hired by his

father-in-law. They had stood on the platform between benches labelled ‘Indians Only’ and ‘Europeans Only’, dressed in stained red coats with dull metallic ricrac unraveling about the sleeves and collars” (Desai 36). Jemubhai’s family knows that Jemu’s future education in England will ultimately grant him enhanced prestige and power. When he returns, Jemubhai tries to impose his perceptions on his kinsmen and in the process, he is alienated. He kills his wife because she cannot speak English. Jemubhai’s outlook is entirely influenced by the fact that whoever has capital wields power within the social space. Biju also realises that if he can get the Green Card, he will be able to come out of his social marginalisation. Therefore, he tries to control the factors of production by migrating to a first-world country and trying to gain a foothold within the host society. He tries to be a part of the culture that is alien to him. In *The Lowland*, Udayan becomes a Naxal and tries to change the social order. Jhumpa Lahiri portrays the existing social scenario by pointing out the social, inequalities that Udayan had tried to change. When Subhash tries to reason with his brother by asking whether the peasants of Naxalbari did the right thing by protesting, Udayan responds by saying, “Of course it was worth it. They rose up. They risked everything. People with nothing. People those in power do nothing to protect” (Lahiri 25). The novelist in the novel shows how people positioned higher in the social hierarchy do little to protect the marginalised. However, his involvement with the Naxals proves to be counter-productive and he is killed by the police. Jhumpa Lahiri has tried to show that institutions such as the law enforcement agencies and educational institutions are framed by the capitalists and it is this factor that Udayan and his comrades tried to change. In *The Lives of Others*, Supratik tries to change

the social order. His family controls a paper mill and represents the bourgeoisie. The family maintains a cordial relationship with the police. “Over the years, the Ghoshes had tried to cultivate and maintain a good relationship with the police; gifts, not all nominal or token, sweeteners, things to keep them happy and on their side” (Mukherjee 249). It is evident from the quoted lines that the police is more interested to protect the interests of an industrial family like the Ghoshes. Supratik knows that he will be a respected person if he follows the family business. However, he chose to become a Naxal and change the world. His processes were not always right and he is unable to bring any change. Neel Mukherjee while sketching the character of Supratik shows how the industrial class of Bengal tries to dominate the social space.

Coming to Gramsci's perception on Base and Superstructure, he later divided Marx's Superstructure into two further sub-divisions: the political society and the civil society. The political society refers to the organized state institutions such as the police, military, etc. while the civil society refers to the state officials who try to create a hegemonic space and eventually, cultural hegemony. They try to manipulate institutions such as the media and educational institutions. These institutions are heavily influenced by the Base and they are used to enforce certain values and norms that are modified as per the needs of the powerful class.

According to Gramsci, the ruling class executes the function of the hegemony through civil society. Gramsci also defines the concept of hegemony as the worldview which can also be defined as the beliefs of the dominant classes that is eventually

regarded as 'common sense' by the subordinate classes. Some people believe that the only way to appreciate the world is to view it through the prism of the dominant class. They cannot accept that there can be an alternate viewpoint as well. People who accept the alternate viewpoint are therefore, marginalised and not taken into consideration. These dynamics, in turn, gives birth to the subsequent power relation between force and consent. In this context, it is pertinent to note that Gramsci has always believed that hegemony over the masses is achieved through consent. This relationship between force and consent can be witnessed in micro-sites of struggle as well, such as family. In Sujata's family, it can be seen how Dibyanath Chatterjee, the husband of Sujata Chatterjee forces her to abandon her career. Furthermore, Sujata is expected to follow a certain lifestyle that is in adherence to what Dibyanath expects. When her son dies, she cannot grieve properly. The family structure that is shown in the novel is representative of the dominance of the Base because Dibyanath is the one who earns money and controls the family financially. A very similar trait can be seen in novels such as *The God of Small Things*, *The Lowland* and *The Lives of Others*. In all the three novels, it can be seen how the patriarchs of the family wrest control over the other members of the family. Furthermore, the women characters like Ammu, Sujata, Gauri are expected to remain subservient to the dictates of the male members within the family space. The entities of force and consent thus work simultaneously and cannot be treated in isolation. They are just two sides of the same coin. Sujata's miserable condition can be identified from the following lines: "Suddenly, impulsively, Sujata did something she never did. It was not like her to act on emotion alone. She had never in her life dared to surrender to her

normal impulses” (Devi 79). It is evident that Sujata was not expected to have a choice of her own. Another woman character in *Mother of 1084*, Somu’s mother has the same experience of being subjugated although Sujata and she come from very different socio-economic backgrounds.

You are right. Didi, I am a doomed woman, doomed from birth. Even the wild foxes and dogs weep over my fate. My father married me off years ago. My man never had a chance to learn how to read or write. He was the eldest in the family. He had to run the household. Back in the old country he had a plot of fertile land. Here he had nothing. He was not the kind of man to grab whatever came his way and improve his lot. It was nothing but misery, misery, all the way. Sujata could follow every word that Somu’s mother spoke. (Devi 54)

The similarities between Somu’s mother’s and Sujata’s experiences are to be noted. It proves that culture plays a crucial role within the domain of Superstructure.

Jhumpa Lahiri, while portraying the character of Gauri observes:

In childhood, aware of her accidental arrival, she had not known who she was, where or to whom she’d belonged. With the exception of Manash she had not been able to define herself in relation to her siblings, nor to see herself as a part of them. She had no memory of spending a moment, even in a house in such an isolated place, ever, alone with her mother or father.

Always at the end of a queue, in the shadow of others, she believed she was not significant enough to cast a shadow of her own. (Lahiri 72)

The above-quoted lines once again prove that the woman protagonist in *The Lowland* was subjected to marginalisation. The character portrayal is very similar to that of Sujata's in *Mother of 1084*. Furthermore, it can be also observed that within the Naxal Party, the women cadres were supposed to carry out menial jobs only. The major 'operations' were executed by the male cadres. All these features point towards the fact that a certain degree of 'consent' was expected within the organisation.

The general direction towards which the social lives of the masses have been veered has been dictated by the dominant classes. The social prestige and enjoyment that the dominant classes enjoy has been mainly due to the forces of production practiced within the space of Base. Moreover, the political social space exercises control over the proletariat. The action of the political class is often legitimised and therefore, can be legally enforced on the rest of the social groups.

Mahasweta Devi, one of the selected authors, has always been concerned about the proletariats who have been at the receiving end of the state policies. Thus, somewhere she must have felt that the revolutionaries were working for the poor people. This is reflected in her *Mother of 1084*. She was drawn towards the revolutionaries because of their idealism. The revolutionaries fought against the oppression that has been continuing for centuries. Uma Parameswaran believes, "She re-creates a span of history, imbuing her narration with trenchant satire against government and city people and soul-stirring

poignancy for the peasants, tribals, and student idealists” (Parameswaran 457).

In the *Mother of 1084*, the character Brati Chatterjee is a member of the Naxalite faction. He is betrayed by one of his own comrades and later, he is killed by the police. His corpse numbered 1084 lies cold in a police morgue. His father bribes the police so that the news of his death doesn’t come out. This is significant because it implies that a section of the civil society never wanted to identify themselves with the cause of the Naxals. However, on the other hand, in *Mother of 1084*, Brati’s mother experiences an extreme state of grief and she revisits her son’s life by trying to reconstruct the events that had led Brati to join the Naxals and later, his capture by the police and his subsequent death in police custody. It is through the eyes of Sujata Chatterjee, Brati’s mother that we realise how Brati and his comrades had revolted against the hypocritical society and the state funded terrorism that was conducted by the police and the military. Furthermore, Brati fought against the ideological apparatuses that were working at the behest of the state. Herein, we can see how *Mother of 1084* can be viewed from the prism of Gramsci’s thoughts. The entire narrative of *Mother of 1084* takes place on Brati’s second death anniversary which is also coincidentally Sujata’s daughter’s engagement day. This is significant because all the other members of the family are involved in the celebration while Sujata grieves for her dead son. The rift between the members becomes clear. It is also to be noted that the portrayal reflects the social conditions of the time. The elitism that was present was bereft of any moral values and the only thing that Sujata’s family members wanted was to associate themselves with the upper and wealthy classes of the society. Ironically, this upper class is hand in gloves with the state administration

and they are the ones who are responsible for the oppression of the poor and the proletariat. Sujata's daughter is getting engaged to the socialite Tony Kapadia. Tony's mother's guru lives in the US and it was he who had suggested the date since it was auspicious. Such a community had no connection with what was happening in Bengal during the time. That is what affects Sujata because she wanted the world to know about Brati and his struggles. She wanted the society to know what Brati stood for. Unfortunately, the bourgeoisie is least concerned. Furthermore, in the war of position, they are reluctant to give way to the working class. They are the members of what Gramsci called the 'organic intellectuals.'

Sujata spends her time visiting Brati's comrades and his girlfriend Nandini. All these visits bring out the human aspect of Brati and remove the tag of terrorist from the name of Brati. The reader gets to know that Brati and his comrades were actually fighting for the proletariat. They just wanted to remove the existing hegemony and ensure that the voiceless people also get a chance to participate in the functioning of the institutions that were present in the social superstructure. Sujata understands the circumstances that led Brati to take up an armed cause. The sheltered world of the upper classes and the pretensions that surrounded the upper class people could not affect Brati although he himself was a member of the upper class bourgeoisie. *Mother of 1084* projects the human stories of an event that happened a long time back in India. Indeed, *Mother of 1084* forces the reader to re-think about the social agencies that are funded by the state and the ideology that they are trying to promote. Furthermore, it can also be seen how the organic intellectuals had all along supported the state and its modes of oppression. Shilpi

Bhattacharya comments, “*Mother of 1084* is the most blatant picture of the Indian government's atrocities as it staged death, torture, and violence in response to the resistance that arose during the Naxalite rebellion in West Bengal in the 1970s” (Bhattacharya 3). Indeed, the state’s socio-political apparatus is challenged in *Mother of 1084*. The novella portrays how young men like Brati fought for the people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Certain images in *Mother of 1084* are significant. The police torture of Nandini where she is tethered to a chair is pathetic and inhuman. In another instance, Saroj Pal, the police officer tortures Nandini by placing a burning cigarette on her cheek. All these images suggest that the so called state apparatuses are nothing but oppressive by nature. Nandini’s right eye is damaged as well because she was subjected to the exposure of extreme bright light by the police during her interrogation. All these point towards an extremely ruthless and inhuman state administration. Shilpi Bhattacharya further observes, “Similarly, Naxalite members imprisoned “without trial” are “unclassifiable beings” who are exposed to the state's wrath. They are held indefinitely and subjected to psychological and physical torture by interrogators” (Bhattacharya 5). Nandini’s screams after she learns of Brati’s death is also significant because that reflects her defiance. Bhattacharya comments, “This is a reversal of the state's authority, as well as an affirmation of marginalised and silenced voices in the face of modern biopolitics” (Bhattacharya 5). Works like *Mother of 1084* gives vision of a better world and suggest that drastic changes need to be brought within the spaces of biopolitics and resistance politics. Instances of police torture can be found in *The Lives of Others* and *The Lowland*

as well.

Supratik tries to stand up from his kneeling position. Immediately the four officers surrounding him pounce and, before further orders can be given, drag him by his overgrown hair down the stairs as they would the carcass of a huge, butchered creature. Supratik roars in pain again and lets out an unearthly elongated call for his mother – ‘Maaaa!’ (Mukherjee 466)

A similar sight can be witnessed in *The Lowland* as well.

For a moment it was as if they were letting him go. But then a gun was fired, the bullet aimed at his back. The sound of the shot was brief, unambiguous. There was a second shot, then a third. “She watched his arms flapping, his body leaping forward, seizing up before falling to the ground. There was the clean sound of the shots, followed by the sounds of the crows, coarsely calling, scattering.” (Lahiri 125)

The horrific nature of the killing can be gauged through these lines as well: “The soldiers dragged his body by the legs, then tossed him into the back of the van. They heard the doors slam shut, the engine starting up again. The van containing the body, driving away” (Lahiri 125).

Udayan’s parents could not even see the body of their dead son. The state machinery’s ruthlessness and criminal nature is brought forth through these lines:

The body was not returned to them. They were never told where it had

been burned. When her father-in-law went to the police station, seeking information, seeking some explanation, they denied any knowledge of the incident. After taking him in full view, his captors had left no trace. (Lahiri 129)

The concept of hegemony as defined by Gramsci not only refers to the activities of the ruling class but also the processes that are used to maintain the political control over the proletariat or the working class. The society, at large, is inclined to believe in a particular dominant ideology that is designed to control the social and political trajectory of the masses. The words that we speak and the language that understand are loaded with political undertones that present before us a particular image, representative of the thoughts of the dominant class. Furthermore, the masses are also discouraged to think in any particular way. To cite an example, the activities of a housewife in a traditional Indian household are often characterised by unappreciated and unpaid household chores. This brings us back to the attention that modern capitalist societies are often assessed in terms of the monetary value it brings into the hands of the dominant class.

A very pertinent example will be to cite the example of the great American dream. Towards the beginning of the twentieth century, people were encouraged to believe that just hard work will bring in the ideal life that is characterised by owning a house, cars and having a perfect family. This dream further encourages us to believe that no matter what people's origins are, hard work will eventually pay off and bring in prosperity. However, it is also seen in this world that a number of people toil extremely

hard and yet, they remain poor and are not in control over the factors of production. This same hegemonic tendency can be found in the usage of the English language as well. The British tried to undermine the linguistic diversity of India and tried to promote learning of English as the only way to gain confidence of the political masters. Lord Macaulay's education policy is an example in this regard.

Therefore, it can be said that Gramsci wants us to believe that the ruling class exercises their power not just through economic factors. Therefore, it can be safely inferred that the dominant classes not only control the wealth and power of the state but also determine the values and ideas that exist within the social space. The ideas and values are also conveyed as the normal thing or the 'common sense.' To address this scenario, Gramsci suggested that the working class should develop its own counter-hegemonic forces and develop a team of intellectuals who can initiate a revolution to fight against the 'common sense' ideas and values of the existing dominant class.

The Superstructure of the social space includes the culture, ideology, norms and the different social identities surrounding the people. Furthermore, the various social institutions, political establishment, and the state's governing agencies also form a part of the Superstructure. Marx believed that the Superstructure came out of the Base. The Superstructure demonstrates the ruling classes' interests and therefore, is always governed by the ruling class. Therefore, the basic objective of the Superstructure is to defend the power and position of the elites.

Both the Base and the Superstructure are neither static nor are they naturally

occurring. They are social creations that have been built by the elite class to maintain social hierarchy. The constantly evolving social interactions between the different classes also form a determining factor in the formation of the Superstructure.

Hegel, on the other hand, felt that ideology determined social interactions and that people's thoughts affect the social happenings around them. Marx never agreed and felt that considering the historical shift from a feudal to a capitalist system of production, the concept of Superstructure is more designed to suit the interests of the ruling class.

Marx believed that the shift to a capitalist mode of production deeply impacted the social scenario. The shift forces us to have a look at history from a materialist point of view. This approach later came to be known as 'historical materialism'. Historical materialism basically revolves around the fact that what we produce determines everything else in society. Therefore, a new perception came in existence that defined the thought process in place and the existing reality.

One thing is certain and that is, the relationship between the Base and Superstructure is certainly not a neutral one. The Superstructure emerges from the Base. The Superstructure has the power to legitimise the Base. It creates the space and condition that forces us to believe that the modes of production are fair and natural and they are meant for the good of the people. It hardly matters whether the Superstructure is actually meant to serve the ruling class. Marx felt that religion is one of the important components of the Superstructure. Religion often urges its followers to work for a certain goal. The goal invariably is guised under the garb of welfare of the people but in reality,

religious institutions validate the welfare of the rich and the ruling classes. Another false promise that religion offers is the way to attain salvation if an individual works or behaves in a certain way. This is actually aimed at fooling the people because the ultimate goal is to serve the rich. Taking this idea forward, Antonio Gramsci felt that the objective of the state has always been to protect the rich and the powerful. An example can be cited in the form of crony capitalism. The state protects the interests of the business establishments and the business house, in turn, returns the favour by sponsoring the ruling government in power.

Marx's theory of historical materialism can be applied on Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. In the Ayemenem House, it can be seen that Chacko, being the owner of the pickle factory enjoys much more freedom than Ammu. It is perhaps because Chacko owns the means of production and is a member of the bourgeoisie. This also gives him liberty to sexually exploit the women workers of his factory. However, Ammu, on the other hand, is relegated to a state of marginality. Thus, it can also be said that the hierarchical positioning of the characters within the social Base and Superstructure can also be seen in a micro space such as the family.

In Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, we find the same colonial discourse that resulted in the marginalisation of a certain section of people. The unequal power relationship can be frequently found in the novel. Different forms of subaltern people can be found in *The God of Small Things*. The inhabitants of Ayemenem House – are all victims of colonisation. Therefore, they are in some way or the other subalterns. Most of

the members of Ayemenem House are culturally and linguistically colonised. We also find the reference of the Paravan community who are at the bottom of the caste hierarchy in India. They are the untouchables who experience exploitation of every kind. The following lines portray the kind of harassment that an outcaste like Velutha faces.

Baby Kochamma misrepresented the relationship between Ammu and Velutha, not for Ammu's sake, but to contain the scandal and salvage the family reputation in Inspector Thomas Mathew's eyes. It didn't occur to her that Ammu would later invite shame upon herself – that she would go to the police and try and set the record straight. As Baby Kochamma told her story, she began to believe it. (Roy 259)

The women of the Ayemenem House are also victims of patriarchal oppression. Thus, in *The God of Small Things*, we find the relationship of domination and subordination of certain sections as well as their objectification. Female subjugation can also be found in *Mother of 1084*. In lines like: “All the time that Sujata had gone on submitting to Dibyanath, bearing his children, Dibyanath had gone on sleeping with other women. After Sujata's refusal, his sex life outside the house became more active. If that was a snare to make Sujata feel guilty, she did not fall for it” (Devi 47). In this context, there is a similarity between Dibyanath and Chacko.

In the novel, we find the love story between a Syrian Christian divorcee Ammu and the untouchable Velutha. The fact that their love is not accepted by anyone proves beyond doubt how the caste system works in India. Other instances of social oppression

can be found in the novel as well. The attitude of Chacko towards the factory workers and also towards the other family members of the Ayemenem House proves the colonial, exploitative mindset that people still nurture about socially inferior groups. Chacko's attitude towards Ammu and other members of the house can be defined in the light of Frantz Fanon's discussion in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon describes how the psychology of people is still inclined towards the colonial masters. This also results in the marginalisation of the anglophiles as well as the oppression of lower caste people like Velutha. In another sentence, the social oppression can be found. "Mammachi persuaded Vellya Paapen to send him to the Untouchables' School that her father-in-law, Punnyan Kunju, had founded" (Roy 74-75).

Anglophilia can be observed in many characters of the novel. The father of Ammu and Chacko always wears English clothes. Chacko completes his education from the University of Oxford where he meets an English woman whom he later marries. Furthermore, the members of the family communicate among themselves in English. Even Rahel and Estha are not allowed to speak in Malayalam. Baby Kochamma punishes them when they speak in their mother tongue.

The anglophilia becomes all the more pronounced when Chacko's former wife Margaret Kochamma comes to visit India. Margaret comes with Sophie Mol to Ayemenem House where she encounters comments such as, "'She has her mother's color, she is a little angel.' Little angels were beach-colored and wore bell-bottoms. Little demons were mud brown in Airport-Fairy frocks with forehead bumps that might turn

into horns. With Fountains in Love-in-Tokyo. And backwards-reading habits. And if you cared to look, you could see Satan in their eyes” (Roy 85). The distinction in skin colour between the black Indian twins and their half English cousin is stark and highlights the racist mentality that is present among the members of the Ayemenem House.

In India, we find the existence of the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Sudras. Other than that, there are the untouchables who are considered to be outcastes. In Kerala, the caste system is very pronounced. In fact, the social stratification is evident among the Christian community as well. *The God of Small Things* portrays the untouchability and discrimination of the untouchables in the hands of the British. This shows that the Paravan community had been experiencing subjugation since a long time.

When the British came to Malabar, a number of Paravans and Pulayans (among them Velutha’s grandfather, Kelan) converted to Christianity and joined the Anglican Church to escape the scourge of Untouchability. As added incentive they were given a little food and money. They were known as the Rice Christians. It didn’t take them long to realise that they had jumped from the frying pan into the fire”. They were made to have separate churches, and separate priests.... After independence they found they were not entitled to any Government benefits like job reservations, or bank loan at low interest rates because officially, on paper, they were Christians, and therefore casteless. (Roy 35-36)

We also find different churches for the upper-class community and the

untouchables. The humiliation of the untouchables has been appropriately portrayed by Arundhati Roy. The oppression that was meted out to the socially inferior Paravans can be aptly seen in the following lines:

His father, Vellya Paapen, was a Paravan.As a young boy, Velutha would come with Vellya Paapen to the back entrance of Ayemenem House to deliver the coconuts they had plucked from the trees in the compound, Pappachi, would not allow Paravans into the house. Nobody would. They were not allowed to touch anything that touchables touched. Caste Hindus and Caste Christians. Mammachi told Estha and Rahel that she could remember a time, in her girlhood, when Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's footprint. In Mammachi's time, Paravans, like other Untouchables, were not allowed to walk on public roads, not 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. (Roy 34)

Mammachi and Baby Kochamma always feel that they are socially superior because they belong to the minority group Syrian Christians. The Syrian Christians were believed to be, "descendants of the one hundred Brahmins whom St. Thomas the Apostle converted to Christianity when he traveled east after the Resurrection" (Roy 64). Herein,

lays the significance of Gramsci's ideological apparatus because the Syrian Christians are made to believe that they are superior than the rest. The Syrian Christians did not mingle with the poorer Rice Christians like Velutha's father. People like Velutha's father had joined the Anglican Church in lieu of food and money. The deep distrust that existed between the two sections of the Christians highlights how social oppression of the subaltern was rampant in the contemporary society. The hegemonic ideologies that have existed within the space of the family can be found in the other selected novels as well. Long standing customs in a Hindu society demand that a widow converts herself into a vegetarian. In *The Lowland*, the following lines indicate that Gauri is also expected to follow a certain lifestyle. "After the mourning period ended her in-laws began to eat fish and meat again, but not Gauri. She was given white saris to wear in place of coloured ones, so that she resembled the other widows in the family. Women three times her age" (Lahiri 130). Furthermore, the expectations from a woman are brought forth in the lines: "One morning, after the first month had passed, she was unable to go to the kitchen to help her mother-in-law with the day's preparations, as she was once again expected to do. Feeling drained of energy, dizzy when she tried to stand up, she remained in bed" (Lahiri 131).

The existential crisis of Gauri can be seen in the following lines:

She wanted to shut her eyes to it. She wished the days and months ahead of her world would end. But the rest of her life continued to present itself, time ceaselessly proliferating. She was made to anticipate it against her

will.

There was the anxiety that one day would not follow the next, combined with the certainty that it would. It was like holding her breath, as Udayan had tried to do in the lowland. And yet somehow she was breathing. Just as time stood still but was also passing, some other part of her body that she was unaware of was now drawing oxygen, forcing her to stay alive. (Lahiri 132-133)

The existential crisis of Willie in *Magic Seeds* is evident as well.

Willie thought, "I have never known such boredom. Ever since I have come to India I have known these terrible nights of boredom. I suppose it is a kind of training, a kind of asceticism, but for what I am not sure. I must look upon it as another chamber of experience. I must give no sign to these people that I am not absolutely with them." (Naipaul 51)

This so-called expectation can be found in *The God of Small Things* as well. When Ammu got divorced, the other members of the family felt that she needed sympathy, because that was the cultural expectation.

Within the first few months of her return to her parent's home, Ammu quickly learned to recognise and despise the ugly face of sympathy. Old female relations with incipient beards and several wobbling chins made overnight trips to Ayemenem to commiserate with her about her divorce.

They squeezed her knee and gloated. She fought off the urge to slap them.
 Or twiddle their nipples. With a spanner. Like Chaplin in *Modern Times*.
 (Roy 43)

Gramsci felt that the natural order of things that were established by the dominant ideology would ensure that the proletariat class questions the existing social structures of the bourgeois class. It has often been found that the natural order of things is garbed under an umbrella term of common sense. This common sense is nothing but an intellectual definition that can be applied on activities of the daily life. However, the commonsense approach often blurs the realities that govern and cause the exploitation of labour. People are often made to believe in what they do. In *Mother of 1084*, it can be seen how Dibyanath becomes a part of the state-funded repression. He supports the police atrocities.

Even as they cried for the dead Brati, Jyoti and Dibyanath had tried to make her see that the killers in society, those who adulterated food, drugs and baby food, had every right to live. The leaders who led the people to face the guns of the police and found for themselves the safest shelters under police protection, had every right to live. But Brati was a worse criminal than them. (Devi 19)

Thus, it is pretty clear that anyone who is opposing the state policies will be branded a criminal. The state-funded policies are always conveyed as something that is good for the people. However, a close reading of the texts can throw a contradictory

viewpoint as well. In *Magic Seeds*, it can be seen how the revolutionaries lack commitment and are, in no way, connected with the revolution.

What had caused him to drop out of that easy life? Was it too great a security, was it a conviction that it would be easy for him to return to that world? Willie studied his face, looking for a clue in the smooth skin, the bland features, the too-quiet eyes, and then the idea, transmitted from the man himself, came to him. 'His wife despises him, and has been cuckolding him for years. This is how he intends to revenge himself. What mischief is this elegant man going to cause?' (Naipaul 55-56)

In the above-quoted lines, it is evident that the counter-hegemonic forces can also lack integrity. Naipaul has been scathing in his attack on the state institutions. The corruption that existed within the institutions of Base and Superstructure can be read in the following lines:

Willie was excited by the prospect of favoured treatment. But his excitement didn't last long. The people in the political cells (there was another) were free, always within the jail routine, to organize their activities. And very quickly Willie saw that this favoured treatment had taken him back to what he had walked away from. (Naipaul 162)

In another instance, from *Mother of 1084*, the corruption within the political circles is horrifying.

The Opposition had always polled a majority of votes in the region. And the Government had taken its revenge by denying the region the simple comforts of a decent road, a health centre, an adequate number of tubewells or a bus route. Those who had grown rich in the last two decades in the region itself had not cared to do anything for the area. (Devi 33)

In *The God of Small Things*, the corruption is brought out in the following lines:

Comrade Pillai had begun to watch the goings-on at paradise Pickles with the keenness of a substitute at a soccer match. To bring in a new labour union, however, small, in what he hoped would be his future constituency, would be an excellent beginning for a journey to the Legislative Assembly. (Roy 120)

Furthermore, the corruption is evident when Comrade Pillai indulges in unethical means to instigate the factory workers.

In the evenings, after the shift was over, Comrade K.N.M. Pillai waylaid the workers of the Paradise Pickles and shepherded them into the printing press. In his reedy, piping voice he urged them on to revolution. In his speeches he managed a clever mix of pertinent local issues and grand Maoist rhetoric which sounded even grander in Malayalam. (Roy 120)

As discussed above, the counter-hegemonic forces can bring in an alternative

hegemonic space as well. It is also born out of the Base and its nature is fluid. Therefore, such a counter-hegemonic force is dynamic and is constantly developing within the socio-cultural space. Talking about the Gorkhaland insurgents who were fighting against their own marginalisation, the novelist mentions how the insurgents were harassing the common people.

If you were a Nepali reluctant to join in, it was bad. The Metal Box watchman had been beaten, forced to repeat “Jai Gorkha,” and dragged to the Mahakala Temple to swear an oath of loyalty to the cause.

If you weren’t Nepali, it was worse.

If you were Bengali, people had known you your whole life wouldn’t acknowledge you in the street.

Even the Biharis, Tibetans, Lepchas, and Sikkimese didn’t acknowledge you. They, the unimportant shoals of a minority population, the small powerless numbers that might be caught up in either net, wanted to put the Bengalis on the other side of the argument from themselves, delineate them as the enemy. (Desai 279)

Thus, a deep distrust can be seen within the social circles that are presented within the plots of the selected works.

It is to be noted that family priorities also prevent the working class to question

the values that are at play within the social hegemonic space. This common sense propagated by the ruling class ensures that the working class never questions the socio-economic oppression that is thrust upon them by individuals or by the collective society as a whole. This common sense is found in *The God of Small Things* as well. Şule Okuroğlu Özün observes, “Though both Vellya and Velutha are representatives of Paravan (one group of the outcastes in India), Velutha is against the caste system and differs from all of the untouchables with his talents and freedom of ideas” (Okuroğlu 429). In fact, Velutha has to go to a school that is reserved only for the untouchables only. Velutha often offers his suggestions when it is clear that his opinions are unwelcome. He rebels against the common sense that is perpetrated by the upper-class people of contemporary society. The fact that he has an affair with an upper caste causes irretrievable damage and ultimately, Velutha has to die because of his actions. Thus, it can be seen how cultural hegemony causes damage to the characters in *The God of Small Things*. Talking about *The God of Small Things*, Priya Joseph comments, “The novel is a comment on the society of the clime not merely influenced by the imposition of colonialism in a not long ago past and a newly acquired independence, but by survivals of feudal and caste laws and the essential inequality of opportunities for development and progress” (Joseph 123). Joseph’s observations are indeed true because *The God of Small Things* highlights the tremendous amount of injustice that the subaltern classes have to face daily.

According to Marx, the relationship between Base and Superstructure is dialectical. It implies that each influences the other. As the Base changes, the

Superstructure is affected. Similarly, when the Superstructure changes, the Base also gets altered. The relationship is not just causal but reciprocal. Marx's expectations were that the working class would soon realise that they were an exploited lot and they should revolt against the ruling classes. Once the working class revolts, the conditions of the Base would change and this would affect the social conditions that impact the Superstructure.

Marxian scholars largely believe that economic structures offer a background to social life. The economic structures are extremely important when it comes to defining social life. The discussion of the economy cannot be complete unless the modes of production are defined in their respective contexts. In this context, it is pertinent to cite the example of Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*. Biju, to gain a decent lifestyle, migrates to the US despite all hardships. Therefore, for him and his father, the cook, the economic context is very important when it comes to defining the social lives that they have to lead. The same is true for the retired judge because he gets married to someone whom he never loves. Therefore, the marriage is just a means to attain money so that the judge can go to England to study law.

The modes of productions are defined by the various factors of production that include industry, land, technology, religion, capital, etc. The factors of production define the relationship that exists within the space of production. Thus, production essentially derives its power from the economic relation that forms the basis of foundation of human society.

One thing has to be noted and that is the resistance movements that challenge the existing hegemony can also turn hegemonic when it comes to power. An example can be cited from V.S. Naipaul's *Magic Seeds*. When Willie Somerset Chandran visits Berlin to meet his sister Sarojini, he finds himself being led towards a revolution by her. Willie has no idea about this revolution, yet he joins the revolution because he is made to believe that the revolutionaries are determined to liberate the subalterns from exploitation. Willie finds it thrilling and eventually, joins the revolutionaries because he feels that the revolution would give him a platform to achieve an identity. Naipaul never names these revolutionaries, yet we can assume that Naipaul is talking about the Naxalites who are active in the southern states of India. Willie is told by Sarojini that he needs to comprehend his own history because according to Sarojini,

All the history you and people like you know about yourself comes from a British textbook written by a 19th-century English inspector of schools in India called Roper Lethbridge. It gave us many of the ideas we still have about ourselves. One of the most important of those ideas was that in India there were servile races, people born to be slaves, and there were martial races. You and I belong to the servile races. (Naipaul 23)

After Willie returns to India, he falls into a world of nostalgia and care very little for the objective that had prompted him to join the revolutionaries. The common sights and sounds, the smells of India overwhelm him and Willie is soon transformed into someone who is frivolous about life and does not really care about what is happening

around him. The element of pathos used by Naipaul and the sentimentality that hovers around the character of Willie proves that Willie is not a strong character. Unlike Brati Chatterjee, the Naxal leader of Mother of 1084, Willie is reluctant to participate in the revolution. He has already lost his vision even before he has joined the rank and file of the revolutionaries. When Willie actually joins the revolution, he comes in contact with the poor people who have braved poverty and who are positioned in the extreme bottom of the society. Therefore, in *Magic Seeds*, we find an alternative image of a resistance movement. The revolution that is planned by Willie and his comrades is nothing but a platform to satisfy their own egos. Furthermore, they hardly have any tangible agenda.

The poor villagers whom Willie meets are often referred to as matchstick people, cricket people by the revolutionaries. Thus, the revolutionaries are themselves racist and are responsible for the subjugation of the subaltern people. “Now there came the order for the squad to get villagers to kill better-off farmers. This was no longer optional, a goal that might be reached one day when conditions were suitable. This was an order, like a retail chain ordering its managers to increase sales. The council wanted figures” (Naipaul 144). The objectives of the revolution have been subverted. The revolutionaries are no longer interested to end the hegemonic situation. They have become agents of hegemony themselves. It is through Willie’s eyes, we find that human life is negated and humiliated by both the state funded police and the revolutionaries. In fact, Naipaul paints the revolutionaries in a weird fashion, almost bordering on absurdity. Willie’s comrades have joined the movement because they want to attain their own personal goals. The leader of the revolutionaries Kandapalli is never present. Thus, his absence symbolises that the

movement is leaderless. Furthermore, the absence of any proper nouns imparts that Naipaul is reluctant to provide any identity or importance to the so-called revolution. Jeffrey Folks comments,

Naipaul's characterisation of Willie Chandran has particular relevance for our culture, for it is the story of one who wishes to "transcend" all parochial and local definitions of identity and attain a sort of universality that will vaguely align him with the causes of human rights and social equality, without placing any actual demands or limits on his own conduct. (Folks 252)

Thus, it is pretty clear that a revolution may not always succeed if it does not have clear and objective goals. There is always the risk of the revolution getting hijacked by the organic intellectuals who are state funded.

The revolution portrayed in *Magic Seeds* is nothing but an aimless and meaningless exercise. In the words of Naipaul, "His comrades are driven not by idealism but by their own warped, misspent lives, and he 'wondered what weakness or failure had caused them in mid-life to leave the outer world and to enter this strange chamber'" (Naipaul 133). For them, the revolution becomes a platform wherefrom they can exercise their power over the poor villagers. They are not at all sympathetic nor do they have any fellow feeling towards the villagers. When Willie's reads Gandhi's autobiography, he realises what a real revolution looks like and the sham that he is involved with. "I wish this healing book had come my way 25 years ago I would have aimed at another life. I

wouldn't have lived that shabby life in Africa among strangers” (Naipaul 265). These happenings indicate that an existing hegemonic state can be replaced by an even worse hegemonic society. After Willie is arrested for taking part in the murder of a wealthy farmer, it is proved beyond doubt that the revolutionaries have lost touch with the ground realities. The revolution that Naipaul describes is full of maniacs and perverts who have nothing to do with the upliftment of the poor. Thus, Willie’s positioning only proves how a revolution can turn into something dubious. In this context, Gramsci’s theory of hegemony is again relevant. The state is always trying to manipulate the traditional intellectuals. For this, the state uses the organic intellectuals who support the state policies. It might happen that in the revolution portrayed in *Magic Seeds*, the state has successfully infiltrated the ranks of the revolution and influenced the leadership to such an extent that the leaders of the revolution have forsaken their benevolence and become monsters themselves. Brooke Allen believes, “Yet rather than inspiring revolutionary thoughts, these sights make him understand revolution as nullity too. His comrades are driven not by idealism but by their own warped, misspent lives” (Allen 28). Here, Brooke Allen is talking about the futile lives that Willie’s comrades live. From a macro perspective, their revolution has failed to touch the lives of the marginalised people.

Human history can be viewed through the prism of production relationship. The conditions present in the economic Base affect the conditions that surround the Superstructure. It also means that the economic Base has an impact on the entities that dominate the Superstructure such as religion, politics, education, culture, state apparatuses in power, etc. Thus, Marx mentioned that the economic Base is the

foundation of social life. The Superstructure will always address the needs of the class that dominates the economic Base. This will create conditions that will bring in social change. The theory of Historical Materialism is also rooted into the economic relationship between Base and Superstructure. Friedrich Engels further said that the economic structure of the society is the real basis and therefore, the entire Superstructure comprising of the juridical, political institutions, religion, philosophy and culture derive their identity from an economic perspective. Marx believed that the factors of production encompassed the distribution of wealth. The dominating modes of production characterise the essence of the basis. In *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx mentions how men enter into social relations that are independent of their will and that can be further defined as material factors of production. The relationship that exists between the individual and the social equations that s/he shares with the other social constructs later give rise to a social consciousness that can be said to suit the needs of the elite classes. The real foundation, therefore, legitimises the legal and the political Superstructure and furthermore, a social consciousness is born from the Superstructure that slowly percolates into the psyche of the working class who are forced into thinking that the social constructs are built with an intention to serve the poor and the needy which is not always the case. The Superstructure, according to Marx, develops out of the Base and protects the interests of the ruling class. Both the Base and the Superstructure are social creations that are born and influenced by the constantly evolving social interactions among different classes of people. Furthermore, Marxian scholars believe that the economic structure is not to be defined as a particular set of

institutions or productive units. Rather, they represent the entire production relations that are dominated by men, or in other words, the existing dynamics of class relations affect the economic structure. The relationship can be summed up as a kind that exists between the owner of the factors of production and the producer who aids in helping the factors of production to develop. In other words, the economic basis is characterised by material relations. On the other hand, the Superstructure is not dependent on material relations. On the contrary, the Superstructure is defined by economic relations. It has to be noted that the inhabitants of the social space are in some way or the other, connected with the Base. It is also true that there is unequal distribution of wealth and differences in power politics that are directly influenced by the economic character of the Base and Superstructure. The class character is another feature that is predominant in the Base. The relations governing the production process is dominated by the capitalist class or the private ownership. This gives the capitalist class the power to control the means of production. The Base also establishes a link between the forces of production and the Superstructure. Thus, the influence of the political, cultural, juridical institutions on the Superstructure is indirect. Marx always believed that the modes of production of material life influence the social, political and the intellectual lives of the people. Since there is a close relationship between the Base and Superstructure, when the Base is replaced by another within a social space, the old Superstructure will also be replaced by a new Superstructure. The relationship between the Base and Superstructure is never a one way traffic. Rather, both are mutually dependent. The interaction between the Base and Superstructure is defined by economic necessity that ultimately comes out as the strongest influence. Within a

social space, there is a severe class struggle that is characteristic of the various mutually antagonistic interest groups.

Again, when we are talking about economic necessity, *The Inheritance of Loss* has to be discussed. The different characters suffer from various forms of economic crisis and this leads them to participate in various actions that have an unmistakable impact on their relationship. Characters like Lola, Noni, the judge, the cook, his son are, in some way or the other, defined and motivated by a need to earn money. This further motivates them to migrate elsewhere.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, we find instances of multiple migrations where the concept of home gets problematised. The two parallel diaspora narratives of Biju and the retired judge centre on Kalimpong and New York. The cities become synonymous with social exclusion and racial oppression. Both these places become sites of global subaltern politics and thus, we find characters caught in the vortex of complicated politics of hegemony and domination. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, we find that Biju who is an undocumented migrant has to run from pillar to post in order to escape the law enforcement agencies. He had migrated to the US in order to escape from the pitiable living conditions in his own country. Thus, he escapes from his own marginalised existence and eventually, lands in another country only to become marginalised again. “The green card the green card Without it he couldn’t leave” (Desai 99). The quoted sentence demonstrates the desperation of Biju. He had migrated to the US to escape marginalisation. But even in the US, he suffers marginalisation arising out of a

hegemonic situation. Furthermore, the novel is set against the backdrop of the Gorkhaland movement which is basically an identity movement initiated by the Gorkhas settled in the Darjeeling Himalayas of West Bengal.

The Gorkhas have long felt alienated from the mainstream and they, now want a separate state of their own where they can enjoy a hegemonic status. The Gorkhaland movement takes a toll on the blossoming relationship of Sai and her Maths tutor Gyan. Even Gyan is a victim of economic crisis that forces him to take the tutoring job. However, by accepting the job offer, he also realises that there is a huge gap between his social positioning and Sai's. These small details actually help to determine the relationship dynamics of the two classes. Gyan had remained unemployed after earning a Bachelor's degree and so, he agrees to tutor Sai. This description only serves to highlight the economic misery of the Gorkhas. Owing to the lack of unemployment opportunities in Kalimpong, people like Gyan have to do menial jobs. Furthermore, the relationship between Gyan and Sai serves to highlight the class difference between the two. Sai's grandfather's journey to England is another example when Jemubhai travels to a foreign country in order to escape social exclusion. However, when he reaches England, he is subjected to racial abuse and marginalisation because of his skin colour. Thus, the novel *The Inheritance of Loss* contains examples of social marginalisation and xenophobia.

The multi-layered narrative emphasizes the complex interplay of the communal tension, the resistance movement, the illegal migration and the ever changing dynamics of human relationships. The retired judge is an anglophile and perhaps, that makes him a

recluse in Kalimpong because he can find no one worthy with whom he can converse or talk to. Thus, his affiliation to the British ways and customs brings forth the deep rooted hatred and social divisions that are present among the people of Kalimpong. The local Nepali community who thinks that they are entrapped within the larger and majoritarian Bengali community views everyone with suspicion. On the other hand, the judge out of frustration and arrogance refuses to mix with the local people.

The Inheritance of Loss highlights the perils of capitalism. Biju, in order to earn dollars, decides to migrate to the US. However, his own life is affected because he cannot find a stable life and he is always afraid of getting caught by the police. Thus, *The Inheritance of Loss* brings forth cultural hegemony in many a form. Furthermore, *The Inheritance of Loss* highlights how cultural hegemony can itself become problematic within the same social space. Arun Kumar Pokhrel observes,

Desai's narrative conforms to dominant racial and ethnic stereotypes and at times vilifies a Nepali community's political struggles, while portraying the same community as an "entrapped" ethnic minority in a majoritarian Bengali state. Some of these ironical contradictions and ambiguities are inherent in the narrative. (Pokhrel 170)

Labour migration has always been at the core of capitalism. The capitalist enterprises rely solely on cheap labourers like Biju who are exploited because they do not valid papers. Thus, we find very real life examples of exploitation where the subaltern class is made to suffer for no fault of theirs. Gramsci had spoken about loyalty of the

subaltern people. In fact, in *The Inheritance of Loss*, we find that the different groups of subaltern people have different ideas of nationhood. They dream of a better future where the cultural hegemony will be absent. Furthermore, they dream of better social and living conditions that are not always met. Adriana Elena Stoican comments, “Instead of leading to an expansion of cultural horizons, Jemubhai’s twisted incentive to emulate Britishness results in an apparent cultural change. His inability to actually operate cultural fusions illustrates the consequences of his attempts to hold back his cultural specificity” (Stoican 202). Eventually, this results in Jemubhai’s marginality in England as well as in India. Furthermore, in *The Inheritance of Loss*, we find the mention of communities which have been traditionally marginalised although they have lived within the political boundaries of India for ages. In the novel, the physical landscape often turns into an ideological landscape. The different social constructs transform the physical landscapes of Kalimpong and New York into some kind of a psychological space that bears witness to the emotional turmoil of the migrants in a hostile foreign country. Therefore, Gramsci’s hegemony is always re-articulated in newer forms. Furthermore, hegemony may not always occur because of living in a foreign country. Hegemonic exploitation may also occur to people from upper classes.

The idyllic natural beauty of places like Kalimpong and the so-called cosmopolitan landscape of New York City where every community can be found ironically put forward the stress and strains of modern capitalist societies. The protagonists of the novel suffer from ostracization and marginalisation. Kiran Desai also proves that the so-called British notions of equality and fraternity are nothing but myths.

The colonial tropes are clearly visible throughout the novel.

The social discourses that happen in Kalimpong highlights how there are mini class struggles happening within the macro space of the Gorkhaland movement which in itself is another class struggle where the Gorkhas are trying to carve Gorkhaland out of the state of West Bengal. There are other instances where characters have tried to subvert the hegemonic state. “Inspired by his Zanzibari friend’s (Saeed Saeed) refusal to eat pork, Biju needs to assert his religious identity by quitting his job in a non-vegetarian restaurant: — Biju left as a new person, a man full to the brim with a wish to live within a narrow purity” (Desai 137).

When Biju returns to India, he is unable to share his material possessions with his father. Biju is robbed by the Gorkhaland insurgents when he reaches Kalimpong. This incident serves to highlight how human relationship is more important than material expectations and possessions. The cook acknowledges, “Anyway, he said to himself, money wasn’t everything. There was that simple happiness of looking after someone and having someone look after you” (Desai 86). The preservation of family bonds is vital according to Kiran Desai. Furthermore, the robbery committed on Biju also serves to highlight that the insurgents who were trying to overthrow the hegemonic status actually robbed a man who was from the same social status as that of the insurgents. Thus, like *Magic Seeds*, the counter hegemonic agencies can also become agencies of oppression and subjugation.

Within the space of the Superstructure, it is often noticed that the struggle takes

place among the various ideologies present. The capitalists use the different modes for the propagation of their own respective ideology that suits their interests. They will try to manipulate the thinking process of the people and make them believe that whatever ideology the Capitalists are propagating, is actually representative of normative behavior. The Capitalists use the mass media, audio-visual media and social media to manipulate the existing ideologies and re-define it as 'Common sense', as defined by the Marxian thinker Antonio Gramsci.

The proletariats too have their own way of thinking and taking action but since they are in an inferior power position, they are always at a disadvantage. The Superstructure is an active force and each class within a social space acts accordingly. The bourgeoisie is extremely concerned about the downfall of the socialist system and so they leave no stone unturned in resisting any attempt to overturn the socialist political system. They also use various propaganda machinery to ensure that the agents of the Superstructure act as per their interests and wishes.

However, it must also be noted that the bourgeoisie does not entirely control the Superstructure. The working class, although they are in an inferior power position, at times, manipulates the Superstructure and tries to propagate the socialist ideology. They try to expose the bourgeois exploitation. The proletariats also try to unite themselves so that they can come out of the exploitative space. They try to make their peer conscious of their social standing. The proletariat class uses the existing body of literature, history and law and tries to assert their own position within the existing Superstructure that is heavily

skewed towards the Capitalist class.

Coming back to the selected texts, the Naxalite movement has been portrayed in detail in *The Lowland*. In the novel by Jhumpa Lahiri, we find that the disappointed middle class mainly took part in the revolution that resulted in mindless bloodshed. In the novel, we find the mention of Calcutta youths who are cadres of the Naxal revolution. This is significant because we don't find the mention of any names of the villagers who were the initiators of this movement. This is important to note because a question mark automatically comes as to whether the movement comprehensively addressed the aspirations of the working class or the peasant class. The so-called people's war may not represent the aspiration of everyone. Metropolitan Calcutta became the epicenter of the revolution although the movement started in Naxalbari, a small, non-descript village in North Bengal. Naxalites like Udayan and Manash are Gramsci's traditional intellectuals who have been educated in city schools and colleges. However, they are powerless because they do not have a state affiliation. They aspire to remove the class-based discrimination and bring in a state of egalitarian policies where the working class will enjoy social justice and equality.

The metropolitan city of Calcutta has been perceived as a centre of capitalist exploitation. The dichotomy that Lahiri presents in her novel is significant. On the one hand, we have the metropolitan city of Calcutta where capitalist greed abounds and on the other hand, we have the village of Naxalbari where the movement started. Furthermore, we notice another binary as well. Calcutta youths like Udayan and Manash

are fighting for the rights of the working class although they themselves are not members of the working class. This also brings us to the question if the movement has been hijacked by city bred youths like Udayan and Manash.

Furthermore, if *The Lowland* is analysed, we find that female participation is almost nil. The only Naxal sympathiser Gauri is nothing more than a supporter of the movement who is given responsibilities such as observing the police from a distance and so on. She does not take part in any significant operations. Her only duty is to look after the men folks in the novel. She is a loving brother to Manash while she performs her duties as a lover towards Udayan. So, there is the distinct hint that the movement is a representation of patriarchy. This again brings us to the point whether the hegemony that the Naxals are trying to remove will be replaced by another form of hegemony like the patriarchy. Therefore, Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony cannot be seen from a simple perspective. There are complex factors at play and they need to be analysed. The description of the movement by Lahiri in certain ways speaks of anomalies within the movement. From the author's narration, it is not easy to decipher the involvement of female cadres in the Naxal revolution. Perhaps, the novelist wants us to rethink and investigate whether the revolution was indeed a people's movement.

Gauri has always been portrayed as someone who supports Udayan. Her role is restricted to execute simple tasks involving the Naxal cadres. She was clueless about her activities. In fact, when she provides the information about the police officer whom Udayan and his comrades were about to kill, she never knew that the Naxals were

planning to kill him. Her role within the Naxalite revolution was nothing more than a cameo. Her actions were scripted and controlled by the other male members of the Naxalite party. “She wondered exactly how she was contributing, who might be watching her. She asked Udayan but he would not tell her, saying this was how she was being most useful. Saying it was better for her not to know” (Lahiri 350). Furthermore, we also find that Gauri’s participation in the movement causes a severe psychological scar that ultimately affects her life. The traumatic memories that she has cause irreparable damage to her conjugal life with Subhash. The stabbing and murder of the police officer Nirmal Dey by Udayan and his comrades cause her sleepless nights. This also makes the reader question the ultimate objectives of such an armed revolution. The aspiration to overthrow the state apparatus may look rosy on paper but in reality, individuals may be scarred psychologically. Gauri’s choice of a reclusive life is indicative of a deeply disturbed mindset that she is unable to overcome even after she lives in the US. Moussa Pourya comments,

Whether Gauri was forced to join the politics of Udayan, or what her own expectations were from their conjugal life are left unstated. The silence indicates the manner the emancipatory discourse of the Naxalbari politics is ironically imposed by the patriarchs. Gauri’s exclusion from the politics of Naxalbari is suggestively in line with the way male participants are canonized in the existing historiography of the movement. (Pourya 388)

Thus, the Naxal movement as portrayed by Lahiri was essentially a male dominated

movement.

The guerilla warfare perpetrated by the Naxals also affected the infrastructures that were funded by the government. Schools were demolished, public places were defaced, and people lived in perpetual terror. Lahiri's description in this context in *The Lowland* again questions the motives of the Naxals. In the end, the vandalism of public property ultimately causes hardship to the common people.

In the middle of the night they [the Naxalites] burned records and defaced portraits, raising red flags They intimidated voters, hoping to disrupt the elections. They fired pipe guns on the streets. They hid bombs in public places, so that people were nervous to sit in a cinema hall, or stand in line at a bank. Then the targets turned specific. Unarmed traffic constables in busy intersections. Wealthy businessmen, certain educators, Members of the rival party, the CPI (M). The killings were sadistic, gruesome, intended to shock. The wife of the French consul was murdered in her sleep. They'd assassinated Gopal Sen, the vice-chancellor of Jadavpur University. They'd killed him on campus while he was taking his evening walk. It was the day before he planned to retire. They'd bludgeoned him with steel bars, stabbing him four times. They took control of certain neighborhoods, calling them Red Zones They set up makeshift hospitals, safe houses. People began avoiding these neighborhoods. (Lahiri 103-104)

Relationship dynamics also started to change. We find that the relationship between Udayan and Subhash begins to crumble. The sanctity of the family space was violated and it can be seen in the conjugal space of Subhash and Gauri as well. Speaking about relationships, Alex Von Tunzelmann observes, “Every character in the novel is, to some extent, withdrawn and emotionally cut off. There is a danger here that some readers may likewise feel emotionally cut off from the protagonists. Lahiri portrays her characters' introversion and defensiveness extremely effectively; so effectively that at times it is difficult to connect with them” (Tunzelmann 46). Furthermore, it won't be completely wrong to say that one of the understated objectives of the movement was to suppress the women as well. It was expected that women only perform their designated duties and nothing else. Therefore, Lahiri's narrative poses certain uncomfortable questions about the Naxal movement.

In other sections of the novel, Lahiri observes, “Dipankar had studied the movement's self-defeating tactics, its lack of coordination, its unrealistic ideology. He'd understood without ever having been a part of things, far better than Gauri, why it had surged and failed” (Lahiri 341). The lines clearly show the failure of the Naxal movement. The revolutionaries had failed to counter the hegemonic forces and themselves became agents of hegemony.

Marxist scholars believe that not only the Superstructure has its own laws of operation and function, it is also influenced by the Base. The changes that can be observed within the Superstructure are also caused by class struggle. This class struggle

can be observed in all the six selected novels. On this note, David Parker observes, “Furthermore, in order to explain not merely the general evolution of the state but also the precise character of French absolutism, it is necessary to move from a general utilization of the base-superstructure model to a consideration of the idea of the relative autonomy of the superstructure” (Parker 297). The characters who are part of this struggle are trying to find themselves a position within the hegemonic interplay that is happening within the space of the Superstructure. The capitalist class that is in itself characterised by contradictions helps the growth of the rift between the haves and the have-nots. In this context, Engels further observed Marx’s theory is similar to that of Darwin’s. Marx developed the evolution of human history just like Darwin did towards the development of organic nature. He said that individuals invariably enter into certain definite relations that are independent of their will. These relations are basically the ones related to production. The totality of these relations of production comprises the economic constructs of the society. Based on these foundations, the Superstructure comes into being that directly relate to certain forms of consciousness.

In *The Lives of Others*, it can be seen how Supratik treats Madan, the family servant. “Madan now visibly flinches as the hissing, which is what Supratik’s words have become, hits him” (Mukherjee 427). “How could he ever have the competence to mount an argument exposing holes in Supratik’s logic (Mukherjee 427)?” Therefore, it is pretty evident that Supratik never tries to obliterate the class division within his own family space. Thus, class struggle can be felt in *The Lives of Others*. However, it is to be observed that class struggle can happen on multiple levels. Class struggle happens within

the family of Supratik and it happens, on a macro space, within the different social classes of Bengal that are dominated by characters such as Supratik's family members and the mill workers. The fault lines between classes are clearly shown in *The Inheritance of Loss* as well.

Noni didn't think this was suitable information for the cook to share. It was important to draw the lines properly between classes or it harmed everyone on both sides of the great divide. Servants got all sorts of ideas, and then when realised the world wasn't going to give them and their children what it gave to others, they got angry and resentful. Lola and Noni constantly had to discourage their maid, Kesang, from divulging personal information, but it was hard, Noni acknowledged, to keep it that way. Before one knew it one could slide into areas of the heart that should be referred to only between social equals. She thought of an episode not so long ago when the sisters had been too fascinated to stop their maid telling them of her romance with the milkman. (Desai 67)

The denigration of a certain community by another can be witnessed in the following lines as well.

The judge looked irritably across the chops at Gyan. His presence, he felt, was an insolence, a liberty driven if not by intent then certainly by foolishness. "What made you come out in such weather, Charlie?" he said. "You might be adept at Mathematics, but common sense appears to have

eluded you.” (Desai 109)

In another instance from the same novel, a similar mistrust can be seen.

And Budhoo, their watchman? They waited for him to arrive with his gun and scare the boys away, but Budhoo did not arrive. “I told you” Lola said in a scorched whisper, “these Neps! Hand in hand” “Maybe the boys threatened him,” spat Noni. “Oh, come on. He’s probably uncle to one of them! We should have told them to go and now you’ve started this, Noni, they’ll come all the time. (Desai 239)

The complex dynamics that existed among the different classes can be witnessed in Neel Mukherjee’s *The Lives of Others*. The Naxalite revolution that rocked Bengal of the 1960s and 1970s also influenced many literary works. Among them, *The Lowland* and *The Lives of Others* are the most prominent. The collective imagination was affected by the socio-economic conditions that reigned in the contemporary society. The prologue to *The Lives of Others* describes a labourer who, suffering from poverty, commits suicide. The entire family is destroyed by poverty. This perhaps sets the ball of the plot rolling. It is at this juncture that Supratik Ghosh of the Ghosh family leaves the house to join the Naxalites. Just like *The Lowland*, *The Lives of Others* describes the activities of Supratik Ghosh who is from an upper middle class bourgeoisie. Yet, he decides to join the Naxalites because he feels for them. He offers them leadership and tries to become an organic intellectual whose aim in life is to usurp the existing hegemony and impart socialist rule. The novel contains two parallel narratives, one describing the revolution

and the other, the decadent upper middle class social space of contemporary Bengal. The Ghosh family owns a paper mill business and they are a part of the exploitative class against whom Supratik and his comrades revolt. The confrontation between Prafullanath and the factory workers is a case in point where it is amply evident that the relationship between the master and working class is strained. Furthermore, the Ghosh family is a microcosmic representation of the contemporary Bengali society. Their love of western customs and their snobbishness are characteristic of the age. Moreover, the disturbances and frequent strikes make matters worse. The older generation does not any more interest in the family business and the younger generation enjoys a state of fantasy where they take refuge in Mao Tse Tung's speeches. Michael Wessels argues, "The pathological effects of power that Supratik first experiences in the unequal order that prevails within the wealthy Ghosh extended family of Calcutta are greatly magnified in the harsh conditions he finds among the Adivasi smallholders in the tribal belt of Orissa, among whom he is sent to work after he joins the Naxalites" (Wessels 1038). Thus, all these points towards a directionless society. Even the Naxalites are directionless. Supratik's aimless actions that often borders on insensitivity is an example in this regard.

In *The Lives of Others*, it is often found that Supratik toils with the peasants with a sickle in his hand. This sickle is symbolic because on one hand, the sickle is used for cutting crops and on the other, it is a weapon with which Supratik and his comrades murder landowners and other members of the bourgeoisie. Nandini Lal observes, "And it's a red sickle-and-hammer communist emblem that's cruelly tattooed on his sliced-up thigh during police torture" (Lal 516). Thus, the sickle becomes a recurrent motif that

signifies the different angles of the plot. Needless to say, the plot raises some difficult questions for the reader.

It is obvious that the working class and peasants can never be the makers of their own fortune. They are always at the receiving end of power politics. On the other hand, people like Supratik have their own fantasies to satisfy. They join the ranks of the Naxalites because they have a dream of an egalitarian society although, they hardly have any connection with the reality. Towards the end of the plot, we find that Naxalite cadres are removing the fish plates of railway tracks knowing fully well that an express train is about to pass. The impending derailment is inspired by Supratik who was leader of the Naxal Party a few decades back. This clearly points towards the derailment of the movement as well. Furthermore, the novelist makes it very clear that Supratik is no saint. The plan to murder hundreds of passengers implies that his agenda is to implement a state of hegemony that will be equally vicious in nature. The once idealistic movement has now lost its glory, and it has become the refuge of murderers and thugs.

Supratik's increasing inclination towards a theoretical approach that is bereft of any touch with reality only aggravates the moral ambiguity of the Naxalites. The political education that Supratik imparts to the villagers is often idealistic and not at all practical. Supratik does not look down upon the villagers like Willie's comrades do. Nevertheless, Supratik's idealization does not do anything to improve the lot of the villagers.

Supratik's response to the family servant Madan reprimands is very horrific. It brings out Supratik's hatred for the servant class of the household. When Madan asks

Supratik, whether “being kinder to your near and dear ones – isn’t that a bigger thing than doing good for the unknown mass of people?” (Mukherjee 426) Supratik gets very angry at being lectured by a servant and he later frames Madan in a case of theft. Madan is arrested and eventually, he commits suicide. Thus, Supratik is portrayed as someone who is indirectly responsible for the death of a person.

The violence committed by the police is atrocious. The purpose of police torture is to maintain the hegemonic state or as Gramsci calls the war of position. Even Supratik is tortured by the police and it breaks him down immensely. However, Neel Mukherjee describes the violence of the Naxals as well. Supratik and his comrades often challenge their class enemies. In one such encounter, “he [a local moneylender, pawnbroker and smuggler] starts begging for mercy. What sweet music. We know we’re going to slit his bloated stomach, pull out his guts and stuff his mouth with it, but we let him sing for a while.... His stomach was so fat that the hashua sprang back when I tried to stick it in. Then I thought it would be more fun to slit his belly open only a little bit, like surgeons do during an operation” (Mukherjee 343). Thus, the class struggle portrayed in *The Lives of Others* is a realistic portrayal that highlights all sides of the contemporary society. This is not just a one sided battle nor is it a clear case of binary. There are shades of grey and the reader has to study the war of hegemony from multiple levels and prisms. The simple class antagonism in Marxism is complicated and a thorough analysis has to be done before any conclusion can be done.

Back during Marx’s time, the ideas propagated by Marx and Engels were

revolutionary. The constructs such as culture, knowledge, values, ethics, beliefs, etc. cannot function independently. They are to be analysed in the light of their material contexts, how the various constructs are produced by the 'productive forces' with the help of human labour and technology that form part of the means of production. The different social systems are a part of the relations of production and together with human skills and knowledge affect the modes of production. The modes of production change from communism to capitalism and gradually emphasise the people who have capital in their hands.

Both Marx and Engels felt that Superstructure is a metaphor. Base and Superstructure are not independent entities but rather, they are mutually interdependent. The relationship between the social and ideological Superstructure and the economic Base overlaps and so, it cannot be explained in simplistic terms.

As per Marx and Engels, economic determinism cannot explain the Base and Superstructure in its entirety. The relationship between Base and Superstructure can be defined in a more dialectic manner. That again explains the interrelationship among institutions, ideas, norms, and beliefs. These dynamics constantly change and directly affect even a unit like a family. Private property, state, and other entities also form an inherent part of the Superstructure.

The units of Base and Superstructure, in isolation, refer to nothing. They only make sense if they are studied on a reciprocal basis. They also provide an indication of the way both concepts change over time. Base and Superstructure are also important for

the study of culture, gender roles, arts, etc. In this context, Antonio Gramsci observes that the Superstructure consists of both the political society that include the state, the police, the military, etc. and the civil society.

The civil society includes the social norms, gender constructs, culture, various art forms that are regularly utilised by the capitalist class to exert hegemony over the weaker sections of society. Therefore, in a nutshell, it can be said that the dominant ideas and values are those of the ruling class that has the capital in its hands. However, it is also to be noted that the norms constantly change and the existing behavior and beliefs can be challenged at any point in time and overturned. An example can be cited in this regard. The Black Lives Matter movement has helped us to understand the evils of the oppressive racist attitude that is present in today's society. The existing social space is marked by a certain ideology that is essentially exploitative in nature. Therefore, Marx's assertion that the modes of production affect the social, political and intellectual lives. In fact, the consciousness of humans is less important. The social existence that determines the consciousness of human beings is the most important and that can actually bring about a change within a social space during a certain period of time.

Marx further observed that Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection emphasizes competition and struggle for existence. It proves that scientific knowledge influences society and in turn, is influenced by society. In this context, it is important to analyse the concept of extinction rebellion. It explains how capitalism exploits the environment and the people and how climate change threatens mankind. Dominique

Legros observes,

A century later, it seems that it would have been more effective for him to stabilize the meaning of “social formation” as geo-political entity. First, “social formation” is a new expression free from former meanings. Second, whereas the terms “society”, “country” or “nation” evoke unity and homogeneity, “formation” conveys the idea of a whole composed of heterogeneous components, an idea and a conception which must be kept in mind in order to follow Marx's analysis of geo-political wholes as opposed to his analysis of the synchronic interrelations between the components of a socio-economic regime. (Legros 247)

Therefore, it can be clearly inferred that social contexts have changed and so, have the connotations of Superstructure.

The way to address the economic exploitation is to get involved and form alliances outside the existing units of executive and legislature. In today's age, when many corporations threaten global peace and stability, it is important to act on concepts of equality, gender, politics, culture and the environment. It is also important to note that the most important part of a socialist struggle is the battle of ideas. Gramsci mentioned that the need of the hour is to challenge the ‘common sense’ that upholds the status quo. The view is that the common sense is inevitable and legitimises exploitation. In other words, it is imperative to note that development and renewal of progressive cultures that are rooted in collective resistance against the exploitative Superstructure should be

supported. A counterculture should be upheld to challenge the political basis of Capitalism.

Therefore, in the light of the above discussion, it can be said that the Base is a process and not a fixed state. Superstructure has to be revalued without any pre-conceived or pre-figured content. Superstructure needs to be reconfigured in the light of various cultural practices that have dissimilar characteristics. Superstructure needs to be examined in the context of real life social and economic relationships. Superstructure is a continuously dynamic process that contains contradictions and differences.

In the 20th century, the concept referred to the basic industry. The focus on heavy industry has cultural manifestations as well. It is to be noted that whenever, the cultural manifestations are discussed in the light of the Base and Superstructure, the productive forces need to be accounted for. Some scholars attribute the Base to the workings of the primary productive forces. Marx looked at productive work in a very specific sense that corresponded to the mode of production. In the book *Grundrisse*, Marx believes that the man who manufactures a piano is a productive worker. He poses a question as to whether the man who distributes the piano is a productive worker or not. Probably, he is because he creates surplus value. However, the man who plays the piano is not a productive worker. Therefore, it can be deduced that the piano maker represents the Base while the man who plays the piano represents the Superstructure. Marx, was therefore, more concerned about the capitalist commodity production.

It is also important to note that when Base is discussed in the Marxian light, it

should be seen whether the primary modes of production within the terms of capitalist economic relationship or to the primary modes of production that operates within the social space that will encompass the men involved in the process, the material production and the other associated factors. Therefore, a cultural contextual analysis can throw light on social factors that may not be directly related to the productive labour and productive forces. Certain social forces can be extremely crucial and therefore, they should not be treated as part of the Superstructure. Instead, they should be examined as part of the Base. Terry Eagleton feels, “The base/superstructure model is not out to argue that law, culture, ideology, the state, and various other inhabitants of the super structure are less real or material than property relations. It is not, in this sense at least, an ontological claim” (Eagleton 237). The entire concept is based on determinations. The economic units lie at the root of the social life.

Antonio Gramsci developed his theory of cultural hegemony on the basis of the study of the Base and the Superstructure. He wrote his *Prison Notebooks* when he was imprisoned by Mussolini. Gramsci wrote how the dominant class ideology developed and influenced through the use of consent. Gramsci used the term ‘manufacture’ to describe consent because consent is often manipulated and tweaked to suit the needs of the powerful people. Marx had mentioned in his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* that the economic structure of the society formed the basis on which the Superstructure developed. The Superstructure consists of the legal, political and other social constructs. According to Marx, the Base was described as the forces and relations of production and referred to all the people involved in the process of production.

Furthermore, Marx's definition of Base also referred to the different roles that the people play and also the resources involved.

Taking cue of this observation, Gramsci believed that the forces of production are never idle and they definitely advance. This also impacts the society. Furthermore, human beings are also products of their respective positions in the society or their circumstances and therefore, it has been observed that their will is subservient to the historical modes of production. Whatever happens within the social space such as revolutions, wars, are all determined in some way or the other by the activities happening within the Base. The Superstructure is born out of the Base and it invariably represents the interests of the ruling class that controls the modes of production.

Hiroshi Onishi comments,

In this way, we can understand how productivity determines superstructure directly. However, this determination has become much more significant since the means of production have become critical to production and owned by direct producers (i.e., workers or farmers). This was the class relation forged by the new technology, and this class relation formulates its own special superstructure of culture, ideology, and politics.
(Onishi 79)

Onishi's comment helps us to understand how the means of production has changed and thus, Superstructure has evolved over the ages.

Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks*, further observed that the concept of the Base and the Superstructure can be analysed in the following way: The Superstructure can be divided into levels, viz., the civil society and the political society. The civil society comprises of trade unions, political parties, schools and universities, religious institutions, media, NGOs and all other bodies while the political society comprises of the state and the entities that are directly associated with the State. Gramsci mentioned that the ruling class uses the power of hegemony over the weaker sections of the society with the help of the civil society.

According to Gramsci, hegemony can be redefined as the worldview that encompasses the reality and the beliefs of the class that holds dominance over others. The dominant class, furthermore, redefines the worldview as the common sense. An implied indication is that this common sense is legitimate and this needs to be followed and adhered to by everyone. The perspectives that the dominant class uses appears to be the only legitimate manner that needs to be followed by the other classes. Any deviation in this regard is to be considered as insensible.

Furthermore, Gramsci believed that education, media and the propaganda machineries are also controlled by the hegemonic agencies of power. Gramsci witnessed that the ruling class owned the means of production. Naturally, they had the capital in their hands. Whoever, opposed the people owning the means of production are to be relegated and renamed as the marginalised sections of the society. Therefore, their views will no longer hold any ground.

Gramscian scholars believed that the supremacy of a certain group can be witnessed in two ways. Firstly, the hegemonic group manifests itself through the agency of domination and secondly, the same group makes its presence felt through intellectual and moral leadership. The two agencies of force and consent function simultaneously. There is a sense of balance that occurs between force and consent. Thus, hegemony is largely based on consent that is given by the masses. The masses are told that their consent will eventually lead to greater good.

The dominant group asks for the consent of the masses. The dominant group is historically privileged and therefore, they have the power to convince the masses. They control the means of production, thanks to their privileged position within the social space. The dominant group hegemonizes the worldview and at times, uses the law enforcement agencies to enforce the worldview on the masses. This is in addition to the agency of consent that is already in place. Accordingly, the factor of coercion comes into being.

In this context, it is necessary to study the writings of Louis Althusser. Althusser in his book, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (1970), coined the terms Ideological State Apparatuses and the Repressive State Apparatuses to describe the different agencies that are mandated to work for the dominant groups. In *The Lives of Others*, the following lines point towards the close connection between the wealthy class and the state apparatuses or the law enforcement agencies that are part of the Superstructure.

Over the years, the Ghoshes had tried to cultivate and maintain a good relationship with the police, gifts, not all nominal or token, sweeteners, things to keep them happy and on their side. It was Prafullanath's old advice: 'It is important to be on good terms with them, because you don't know when they're going to come in handy. (Mukherjee 249)

From the above quoted lines, it is evident how the capitalist class has to maintain a good relationship with the state agencies so that the hegemonic ideas are maintained.

Gramsci's definition of hegemony is a comprehensive term that covers the activities of the ruling class and the ways in which the social groups gain the power to dominate. Gramsci also hinted at the ways in which the social groups retain their power. When the political situation of a democracy is analysed, it can be often seen that the rise of a particular political party can be traced back to a similar pattern. The intellectuals try to hegemonise the views as the commoner's worldview and thereafter, riding on the propaganda machinery, they try to gain the political power. Promotion and publicity also play a pivotal role in the rise of such political parties.

The common man felt that the particular political party is trying to address their concerns. Therefore, it can also be said that the common masses gave their consent to the agencies of domination. Gramsci also felt that language can be an instrument of oppression as well since language transmits various ideas. The words that are transmitted through language are basically products of different social interactions that have happened throughout a certain period of time. So, a language is often loaded with cultural

connotations that often influence us to think in certain ways. It also implies that a certain individual is influenced into not thinking in a particular way as well. A very common example can be cited in the social and cultural positioning of a housewife. Often the housewife is seen as someone who is not productive or who does not do any 'real work'. Language here plays an important role because the word 'housewife' is loaded with inactivity and a meaningless existence.

The Capitalist ideology always stresses that any activity is to be analysed in the light of the monetary value that it generates. Thus, language takes the concept of hegemony further and maintains a hegemonic state of existence.

Gramsci described the hegemonic state in three stages. The first stage that Gramsci described is named as economic-corporate. This stage happens when individuals of the dominant group sharing the same interest take collective decisions so that they can maintain and protect their interests. For such individuals, trade unionism is a threat. In the second stage, it can be seen how a unity develops when individuals share the same interests. These interests relate to personal gain only. The lines from *The Lives of Others* show how the capitalist class is interested only in personal gain.

As Adi's interest gravitated towards the scientific and structural-engineering end of things, there was a concomitant diminishment of that part of his imagination that perhaps cooperated, unwittingly, with his father's desire to see this enthusiasm about houses and plots of land directed in one direction only: the growth and maturity of business sense,

or 'material intelligence', as it was called, to the level needed for starting a construction business. (Mukherjee 165)

Hegemony comes in the third stage when the individuals realise that they need to control the workings of the other classes as well. They also realise that the marginalised sections need to accept and conform to the ideas propagated by the dominant class.

Lenin did the same thing when forged an alliance with the peasants. Lenin realised that the Bolshevik Revolution could only attain success if the peasant class was convinced that the revolution represented their interests. Gramsci also realised that it is very difficult to impose hegemony forcibly. Therefore, hegemony through consent is a better alternative. Gramsci termed hegemony through consent as progressive hegemony because it focuses on consent and not on forcible coercion.

Gramsci's assertions can be explained through the propagation of the great American dream. The dream contained the belief that happiness can be pursued by anyone if the individual is willing to migrate to America. Therefore, the United States of America has the potential to make people realise their dreams. This particular dream further stresses on hard work and the result could be material riches that ranged from a house, a car, an affluent family, etc. These aspects form a perfect life that actually caught the fancy of many a person.

This philosophy also ensures that an individual can attain happiness and prosperity if he is willing to indulge in hard labour. However, it is also to be noted that

hard work in itself does not remove poverty in every case. Nevertheless, people believed this theory and participated in the attainment of the Great American Dream.

Other examples of hegemony can be cited as well. Linguistic hegemony though the use of English during the colonial and postcolonial eras can also be cited as an agency of cultural hegemony. The British wanted to dominate the Indian subcontinent and for that purpose, they wanted to eradicate the linguistic diversity of the nation. Macaulay's *Minute on Education* was designed to prepare a section of Indians who will be able to converse and write basic English. The government machinery advertised that the propagation of English was actually meant to enlighten the Indian masses and educate them in Western scientific knowledge. However, the real reason was to create a dominant space where the British could exercise their control over the masses. The process involved getting the Indians' consent. Advertising machinery was also used to create an impression that learning English would solve the problems of the Indians. The linguistic diversity of India was intentionally homogenised through a policy that was carefully and consciously drafted to suit the needs of the ruling class.

Gramsci believed that the civil social space is the mediating agent that transpires to cater to the needs of the dominant group. The civil society acts as the place of formation and the expression of the hegemonic values that represent the class holding control over the means of production. This is in fact, the first stage in the competition that happens within the social space. The competition mainly centres on the control over the ideological hegemony. The civil society becomes a site where the state and the economy

are reshaped.

The main difference between Gramscian theory of cultural hegemony and the Marxian definitions of Base and Superstructure is that Gramsci successfully explained factors that were not necessarily economic. Therefore, Gramscian view focused more on culture and the exchange of values that happened within the public and private spheres. Thus, it can also be said that Gramsci is more interested in the Superstructure. The revolution that until now, focused only on economics is now concerned about ideological struggle that is present within the social space. The ideological struggle eventually decides the validity of the cultural values that are present within the social space. According to Gramsci, civil society is more a product of the Superstructure. The civil society becomes a place where class struggle takes place and competitions happen among the different social groups.

Gramsci further said that political struggle involved the war of position. The war of position is again directly related to the ideological dominance and therefore, is inherently a part of the class struggle. The struggle eventually dictates the presence of hegemony and decides whether the existing terms of cultural hegemony can sustain itself for long. When the working class wrests control of the hegemonic codes, Gramsci believed that conflicts will cease gradually. The civil society will re-form and instead become more of a socialist state because the material conditions have gradually changed because the workers now control the codes of hegemony. The ideological primacy of the wealthy or the bourgeoisie will be at stake if the Gramscian model of change is

implemented. The Gramscian thought pattern can be related to the Leninist model of transition to socialism. Gramsci further advocated that to defeat the bourgeoisie, it is important to manipulate the functions of the different institutions and overpower the workings of such agencies. Eventually, a new change of guard will take place and new intellectuals from the proletariat will bring in an alternative line of thought that will replace the existing hegemonic state.

The Gramscian model of analysis of Base and Superstructure is more flexible and wider since it takes into consideration various social factors. Gramsci pays due attention to social relations, history and the other relevant cultural codes of conduct. Thus, it can also be said that the Gramscian model is more realistic because it examines the correlation of powers in order to observe the greater social picture.

Thus, it can be said that Gramsci took the Marxian notion of taking the concept of Base and Superstructure forward and made it very clear that Base and Superstructure should not be considered only in the economic sense. The dominant class wields enormous clout monetarily as well as ideologically. The values and theories propagated by the dominant class are accepted as normal and legitimised. Gramsci also stated that the social revolution mentioned by Marx can only be successful if a counter hegemony can be developed by the proletariat or the working class. The proletariat has to unite among themselves and produce their own ideas and intellectuals who can challenge the dominant and existing set of ideas.

The analytical outcome of the chapter can be summed up as follows. The chapter

examines the existence of Base and Superstructure within the plot of the selected works and finds out how the characters respond to the forces operating within the spaces of Base and Superstructure. The chapter also examines how Base and Superstructure have an impact on the cultural trajectory of the characters and how their lives are constantly evolving during the course of the plot. It is now imperative to discuss Antonio Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony and its roots. The selected authors portray the subjugation of certain marginalised characters by the ruling class and therefore, it is important to understand what Cultural Hegemony is all about. It is also important to analyse the relationship between Base and Superstructure, and Cultural Hegemony. The following chapter analyses Cultural Hegemony and finds out how the respective plots of the selected works are driven by the dominance of certain majoritarian, cultural groups.

Chapter: Three

Cultural Hegemony

Since the thesis uses the theoretical framework of Antonio Gramsci, it is imperative to discuss and analyse the theory elaborately. Furthermore, it is to be noted that the political scenarios of India and Italy during the time of Gramsci, are entirely different. The thesis uses the Gramscian model only as the theoretical framework to analyse the selected works.

In this chapter, an analysis of Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony is conducted and furthermore, an attempt has been done to situate the theoretical framework of Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony within the ambit of the selected texts. The chapter contains a historical background of Cultural Hegemony and how it descended from Marxism. Furthermore, the chapter discusses how the selected novels can be analysed through the prism of Cultural Hegemony and how possibilities related to Cultural Hegemony can be explored and discovered.

Cultural Hegemony can be defined as the dominance of a particular class within a certain social space. The ruling class that dominates the social space usually tries to manipulate the social, economic and political viewpoints of the social narratives that are in vogue. The word 'hegemony' comes from the Greek word 'hegemon' that refers to the leader state. Therefore, the word indicates leadership and the rule and regime of the hegemon. Hegemony usually works through the implied means of power. Thus, Cultural

Hegemony avoids direct conflict and military annexation.

If we look at the historical context of Cultural Hegemony, we find that Cultural Hegemony owes its origins to Marxism. In 1848, Marx declared that economic recessions and the disparity arising out of a capitalist economic structure would ultimately inspire the working class to revolt. According to Marx, the working class would gradually get rid of capitalism and restructure social institutions. This would gradually result in a transition to a communist society. The changes that will occur will slowly influence the superstructures of the social space. Examples of such superstructures include culture and politics.

Based on these Marxist precepts, Antonio Gramsci said that the anti-capitalist revolutionary stance eventually gives rise to a proletarian culture that directly challenges the existing value system as well as the cultural hegemony propagated by the bourgeoisie. According to Gramsci, “The capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organizers of a new culture, of a new legal system, etc.” (Gramsci 5). The proletarian culture will also give rise to class consciousness and help the mass to analyse the historicity of texts and narratives. Such revolutions will eventually lead to a war of maneuver that later became the praxis of revolutionary socialism.

While examining Cultural Hegemony, it is important to study the origin and rise of Modernism. The Modern period was marked by certain political movements such as Fascism, Nazism, Communism, Anarchism, etc. All these political lines of thoughts

aimed at ushering a better future. Even art forms aimed at a better future. They differed widely in their approaches and treatment of art. Thus, we find the emergence of Surrealism, Dadaism, Cubism, Expressionism, Existentialism, Primitivism, Minimalism, Futurism, etc. All these approaches hinted that the existing values may not be complete and entire in their goals and objectives. Thus, the spirit of questioning was strongly felt during the Modern period. The Modernists questioned every value that was passed on to the period from the preceding age of the Victorians. Ironically, Antonio Gramsci protested against Fascism and drafted the theory of Cultural Hegemony but both Fascism and Cultural Hegemony actually aimed at welcoming a better future.

Modernism refers to an international movement that was felt in both social and cultural spaces during the early years of the twentieth century. The modernist movement aimed at integrating the society with the values that were an offshoot of the modern industrial life. During the Modernist era, artists around the world created artworks that were based on new imagery, materials and techniques that primarily focused on the realities and aspirations of the modern society that was gradually turning into industrial from an agrarian one.

Modernism was further characterised by the established authority of man who was supposedly capable of knowing things and analysing them. Moreover, the modern man was considered to be rationally motivated who could create a new liberated social and intellectual framework. The scholars of Modernism strongly felt that the faculties of arts and sciences would not only control the forces of nature but also assist in the understanding of the self and the world, moral progress and even determine happiness. Thus, this completely new line of

thought was considered to avant-garde in its times. The avant-garde artists of Modernism wanted to develop new representational styles in order to express the complexities of modern life. In the process, art became a medium to express human emotions, moods and sensibility. Modern artists who felt likewise are Francisco Goya, Henry Matisse, Digeo Riverra, Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali, Kathe Kollwitz, etc.

Founders of Modernism believed that human beings can progress through the use of science, technology and knowledge. The beginning of the 20th century was marked by rapid industrialisation and the acceptance of capitalism. Furthermore, Modernists could never identify themselves with Victorian morality and optimism. New ideas in the areas of psychology and political theories inspired the Modernists to search for new means that could give vent to their aspirations. Modernism in literature represented a sense of disillusionment and fragmentation. A classic example of Modernist text is T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. *The Waste Land*, with its fragmentary images and a spiritually vacant landscape required the reader to make efforts while reading and interpreting the text. A sense of disillusionment pervaded the Modernist works. Modernists rejected realism and an objective representation. This tendency gave birth to stream of consciousness novels. Furthermore, the Modernists engaged themselves in alternate ways of thinking. This tendency gave rise to forms of art such as cubism that basically looked at the same event from various prisms simultaneously. Another characteristic feature of Modernism was an experimentation of form. This meant that the traditional difference between prose and poetry gradually became blurred. These general traits inspired many a thinker to advocate a new line of thought that could challenge the existing normative behaviour.

The urge to challenge the existing norms might be seen as inspiring the Marxian school of thought. Capitalism was at its peak during the first half of the 20th century and it brought a distinct sense of polarization. This was more evident during the two Great Wars. The rise of Antonio Gramsci after the First World War indicated that Gramsci was influenced by the Modernist school of thought. He was tempted to challenge the hegemonic advances of both Mussolini as well as the Capitalist regimes that were gaining popularity all over the world.

The next literary age that dominated the literary scene was the Postmodern age. But Antonio Gramsci appeared to be more influenced by the Modernist thoughts since chronologically, his years matched those of the Modernist times. However, it is pertinent to take note of the comparison between Modernism and Postmodernism.

Modernism implied clarity and simplicity. The Modernists wanted a new world that was firmly rooted in reason and rationality. The Postmodernists, on the other hand, emphasised on complexity and contradiction. The Modernists wanted a machine like perfection that was based on progress and learning, the Postmodern subjects bordered on a far from perfect future that was characterised by dystopia. The Modernists believed in utopia. The Postmodern scholars pictured something of an urban apocalypse in their works that was constantly present in the works. Postmodernists believed in complexity and contradiction.

The Modern Period was largely shaped by a sense of the perceived reality that was in turn, influenced by science and technology. The period witnessed rapid progress

in the fields of transportation and mass communication and thus, this had a profound impact on the industrialisation. Furthermore, this also affected the human perceptions. From this, the gradual blurring of the lines between the natural and the artificial happened. This again led to de-realisation, described in the previous paragraph. De-realisation affects both the subject and the objects of experience that finally leads to their sense of identity and constancy being dissolved. This thought process eventually influenced Kierkegaard and Marx. Kierkegaard believes that the modern society is a network of relations where individuals are creation of the press. Furthermore, society is being held together by an abstract idea that actually supports no one. Marx, on the other hand, feels that society is dominated by a fetishism of commodities where objects gradually become spectral values when influenced by the exchange value. Slowly, the fetishism of commodities percolates into various dynamics of social relations. Human beings are closely associated with this entire process of de-realisation because the process of production is based on the fruits of their labour. Workers, working in factories, lose their being in realising themselves, and ultimately this affects the postmodern sensibility.

It is said that the process of industrialisation and modernisation had a tremendous impact on the social plane. After agricultural practices were modernised, farmlands soon became similar to a factory and along with it came the factory's rules, workforce regulations, wage structures, etc. Gradually, this transformation of agriculture into something of an industry percolated to other strata of the society as well. Humanity was greatly affected by this social change and the general value system also underwent evolutionary changes. The phase of industrial production soon expanded its influence

over the economic and social spaces as well. Some people term this change as informatisation because in today's age, the importance of information cannot be denied. Industrial production is still in full swing and it is believed that as long as the consumerist culture survives, the process of industrial production will remain. The gradual change into a state of informational economy also involves a change in the quality and nature of labour. Thus, information and communication have occupied a major position in the entire production process. Andreas Huyssen believes that it may well be a certain annoying triumphalism about globalisation as the latest form of progress that has brought back the historical question of how globalisation is to be distinguished from an earlier formation of modernity and its transnational movements, how it relates to nation, empire, and internationalism in earlier ages, and how its cultural manifestations still work with the legacies of both modernism and postmodernism. One of the major consequences of the change from an agrarian economy into an industrial economy is that people started to migrate to cities. Thus, we find industrial centres growing in every corner of the world. Examples are Manchester, Osaka, Bangalore, Detroit, etc. Industrial production required proximity of elements required to enhance the production process. Another factor that came into being was the need for increased coordination and cooperation among the different production sites. These changes affected the traditional knowledge pattern that was so far used in industrial sites. Now, workers were just a part of the entire production process and they could never become the owner of the entire process. This also resulted in a fragmented ownership that in turn, affected their identity structure.

Simultaneously, if we consider Postmodernism, we find that Postmodernism is an unstable term that cannot be defined in easy terms. Some philosophers feel that Postmodernism is indebted to the doctrines of Nietzsche while cultural theorists feel that Postmodernism is a result of the booming capitalist economy that took control of the world since the 1970s. The Modernists believe that modern life is ephemeral and so, the ideas of unity should be highlighted. On the other hand, Postmodernism accepts difference and the underlying conflicts in human affairs. Postmodernists also acknowledge the concept of plurality in man's existence. Since the 1960s, Postmodernism has been used to refer to the anti-modernist tendencies that were observed in the fields of architecture, art, literary criticism, music, etc. As a philosophical thought, Postmodernism developed around 1970. French thinkers like Baudrillard, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard were considered to be pioneers of Postmodern philosophical literary criticism. Many critics believed that Postmodernism is associated with a 'crisis' that is integral with representation, abandonment of truth, an alienation from universal reason and a digression from the different schemas of progress that came with the preceding age of Modernism. Postmodern critics such as Habermas believe that Postmodern anti-universalism cannot be an absolute tool for moral or political judgment. However, it has to be admitted that Postmodernism has compelled us to rethink and reconsider the possibilities of the emergence of new norms that are based on evolving parameters of human existence.

The terms Modern and Postmodern were both departures from the conventional definitions that were practised in the arts and literature. This departure was also witnessed

in architecture in the 1960s and 1970s. The innovations that were practised by the Postmodernists were gradually considered to be mainstream and started to be adopted by everyone. The advertising industry also contributed to the evolution of these innovative practices. The Postmodern sensibility that gave rise to innovative practices was basically a counterculture that gained prominence during the 1960s. Postmodernists refused to be conformist and wanted instead to be irreverent. Postmodern culture was playful and ironic. The Postmodernists rejected the distinction between higher forms of art and popular culture that was often considered to be low and irrelevant. Furthermore, the status of art and the artist was demystified and brought to a plane that could be accessed by everyone. Postmodern art gradually developed into literary criticism.

Since 1970, right up to 1990, Postmodernism destroyed conventional and established norms. In the process, Postmodernism helped develop a sense of self-awareness that gradually motivated critics to think and appreciate alternate lines of thought that were based on pluralistic premise and sought to lend voice to the otherwise repressed sections of the community. Thus, the range of Postmodern criticism is quite vast that ranges from the ludicrous to the luxurious – a style that is visually appealing and multifaceted, addressing the aspirations of every community and section. It can also be said that Postmodernism was a reaction against Modernism. Since Modernism primarily focused on idealism and a utopian vision of human life and society, Postmodernism felt exactly the opposite. Postmodernists debunked the existing belief and implied that there may be multiple truths present in a certain socio-cultural space. Modernists also felt that certain universal truths or principles are present that can be applied to explain the existing

reality. Furthermore, Modernists experimented with form, technique but they were quite content with the subject. On the other hand, Postmodernists felt that the subject matter needed introspection because the reality cannot be dealt with a singular idea or prism. Many critics believe that Modernism started with ideas that were essentially based on reason and idealism whereas Postmodernism was born of scepticism and a suspicion of that reason which seemed to be the guiding light for the Modernists. The Postmodernists rejected the notion of universal truths or certainties. Instead, the Postmodernists looked inwards and believed that inner experiences can be more productive in imparting meaning to the existence. The interpretation of human experience could hold more meaning towards appreciating life. Abstract principles practically meant nothing for the Postmodernists. Modernists favoured clarity and simplicity while Postmodernists felt that complex narrative structures and layered meanings could only appropriately define contemporary human existence. Thus, in some way or the other, Gramsci can be said to be the precursor to the Postmodernist school of thought although he appeared much before the advent of the Postmodern period.

Postmodernism is basically anti-authoritarian in nature. The Postmodernists refused to accept the grand narratives of contemporary art. Furthermore, the existing definitions and distinctions of high art and popular culture were slowly obliterated. The difference between art and everyday life was also done away with. Since Postmodernism broke away from the established contemporary styles, it established a new chapter of philosophical thought that welcomed alternate lines of thoughts. Innovative literary devices and tools began to be introduced that often bordered on being funny and

ludicrous. The literary styles could also be confrontational at times. Furthermore, Postmodernists were attracted towards controversial topics that transcended the existing boundaries. People began to be self-aware of the heterogeneity of styles and norms. Postmodern literature also borrows from styles used in the past. Postmodernists don't hesitate to adopt existing popular styles and forms of media that have been favoured by the masses. In this respect as well, it can be said that Antonio Gramsci was much ahead of his times. He identified and then, rejected the existing narratives that were actually encouraging the hegemonic codes to thrive. He mentioned in his *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* that cultural hegemony can be challenged only if the proletariat unite themselves and select intellectuals who could lead the movement and destroy the normative capitalist behaviour. The existence of 'common sense' that has been propagated by the capitalist class and legitimised by those in power has to be countered and arrested. However, Gramsci also felt that intellectuals often work for the ruling class. Arun Kumar Patnaik observes,

Gramsci defines intellectuals as leading or active members with leadership qualities in any profession. Intellectuals are therefore leading workers in economic, political and cultural fields. They are 'technicians of knowledge' in a profession. Intellectuals may not be conscious of their class roles. They may think that their ideas are neutral and universal. Actually, their positions are partisan and they promote hegemony of a particular class. (Patnaik 1122)

Nadia Urbinati believes that Gramsci had a poor notion about the intellectuals. Nadia observes, “Gramsci read the hegemonic failure of the making of the Italian state as a failure of its intellectuals, who had been unable to transform the dominion of force into a political and cultural consent” (Urbinati 376). Critics emphasise continuity, narrative and a possible difference within continuity that are present within the Postmodern space. They never feel that Postmodernism contradicts Modernism. The differences between Modernism and Postmodernism are situation within Modernism itself. In this regard, Deborah Haynes comments, “Since 1950, modern paradigms such as scientific objectivity, rationality, and universality have progressively succumbed to postmodernist skepticism, cynicism, fatalism, and narcissism. One result of this shift has been philosophical, theological, and artistic pandemonium” (Haynes 25). Postmodernism is nothing but an alternate mode of thinking. Thus, it can be safely inferred that Postmodernism has its roots within Modernism and is not at all a contradiction to Modernism. Therefore, terming Gramsci as an early Postmodernist would not be totally off the mark.

Antonio Gramsci influenced later fields of studies such as Subaltern Studies and Feminism. Subaltern Studies avoids the mainstream narratives and instead, provides space to the repressed sections of the society. Subaltern Studies goes back to history and finds out the gaps and holes that have so long remained hidden from the mainstream discourses. Subaltern Studies is specifically indebted to Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist scholar and Gayatri Spivak, one of the pioneering critics of Feminism. Spivak strongly feels that narratives should learn to learn from below. Spivak believes that while

discussing any theory, it has to be kept in mind that the discussion has to be done with an objective to produce politically and ethically useful truths that help uncover the reality and present a holistic picture of the particular social space. Subaltern Studies always considers the bottom layer of the society. However, there is a difference between Subaltern Studies and Marxism. Marxism is concerned with the capitalist society and the means of production. Subaltern society is concerned much more than that. Subaltern Studies is often concerned with women where the main concern is gender and very less economic. Thus, Subaltern Studies is much more varied and dynamic.

Antonio Gramsci had used the word ‘proletarian’ to escape the glare of the jail authorities. But soon the word came to mean the working class who were deprived by the social mainstream. Gramsci’s main objective was to position Marxism and analyse the contemporary Italian society to which he belonged. However, later critics continued from here and widened the meaning of the word ‘subaltern’. Thus, ‘subaltern’ came to mean persons or individuals who were separated from upward. In other words, they lacked social mobility and were, in fact, restricted by other dominant social factors. This definition of subaltern studies meant the rise of social movements that were, at one point of time, influenced by the Marxist theory of exploitation by people who had capital in their hands. Furthermore, Subaltern Studies also found preference with the feminists who were by now, concerned with the subjugation of women. Subaltern Studies also included the problems associated with nation spaces and the complexities of homeland. Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak, very interestingly, points out, “Subaltern Studies did not relate to identity politics at its inception” (Spivak 235). Spivak further observes that the goal of

the critics of the Subaltern school was to “set the record straight, to revise historiography, and thus discover the nineteenth century subaltern, largely from the text of the elite” (Spivak 235). These complexities can be found in the texts that the present research analyses. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, the Gorkhaland insurgents are mentioned. They want to carve out a separate state for the Nepali speaking people living in the Darjeeling Himalayas. Furthermore, they have an antagonistic attitude towards the people from the plains. Thus, it can be seen that the Gorkha insurgents rob the judge’s house because they believe that the inhabitants of the judge’s house are from a different community and therefore, they are the ‘other’. This is interesting because the Gorkhaland movement is essentially an identity movement that aspires for separate statehood. Therefore, the Gorkhas are the proverbial ‘other’ but when it comes to the geographical space where they reside, they consider the people from the plains, the non-Gorkhas, as the proverbial other. Another instance can be cited from the same novel. Sai falls in love with her tutor Gyan and their love affair blossoms. However, Gyan is a Gorkha and when the Gorkhaland movement erupts, their love affair crumbles. Gyan considers Sai to be an outsider who has usurped the resources and homeland of the Gorkhas. The charged political atmosphere takes a toll on their relationship and eventually, they break up. Thus, the political movement of Gorkhaland has an impact on the micro plane as well. The family relationships are affected. Furthermore, through the Gorkhaland movement, the novelist shows the fragile geopolitical space that existed in the Darjeeling Himalayas. Therefore, the reader is compelled to become curious and know about the different communities that have lived in the region for years and yet, they are called outsiders by

certain sections of the local community. Thus, the definition of home is heavily problematised in the novel. Similarly, in *Mother of 1084*, the Naxalite movement is joined by promising young men like Brati and others who are ultimately killed by the police. Thus, Mahasweta Devi's novel is an example of Subaltern Studies because it exposes the police brutality and shows how the contemporary youths had become marginalised because they refused to agree to the narratives that the state espoused. On the other hand, *Magic Seeds* by V.S. Naipaul shows marginalisation on a different level. Willie Chandran is unwillingly inducted into the revolution because he wanted some kind of an exposure where he could assert his identity. Unfortunately, Willie gets involved in the vortex and cannot come out. Through the narrative, V.S. Naipaul lays bare the hypocrisies and falsities that had crept inside the revolution mentioned in the novel. The novel is more of a commentary on the individual anxieties and a quest for the identity that the Postmodern man yearns for. Ashok Chaskar sums up the concept of identity by observing, "The common sociological assumption about 'identity' is that it mostly pertains to the individual. But the postmodern era has lent its wider connotations" (Chaskar 13). Therefore, to sum up, it can be said that Subaltern Studies can be an all-encompassing domain that seeks to deviate from the mainstream narratives and provide a voice to the otherwise repressed individuals.

Coming back to interpreting Cultural Hegemony in the light of Marxist philosophy, it can be inferred that Cultural Hegemony analyses the role of the social and economic classes that operate within the base and superstructure. Gramsci modified his concept of Cultural Hegemony and based his theory on the positions of the different

social classes that are generally prone to social and cultural domination. Cultural Hegemony usually occurs when the marginalised sections of the society such as the working and farming classes are made to believe that the existing cultural norms that have been imposed upon them by the ruling class are true and authentically represents the natural order of things within a social space. The existing cultural norms also become a part of the dominant ideology. In this context Liu Kang quotes Raymond Williams and observes,

As Raymond Williams puts it, the concept of ‘hegemony’ affects thinking about revolution in that it stresses not only the transfer of political and economic power, but the overthrow of a specific hegemony: that is to say an integral form of class rule which exists not only in political and economic institutions and relationships but also in active forms of experience and consciousness. (Kang 79)

Raymond Williams carried the arguments of Gramsci further. In *Culture and Society* (1958), Raymond Williams examines conservative English social thought, showing how ‘culture’ was used to critique major societal shifts like industrialisation and class dynamics. He highlights how culture was often positioned in opposition to commerce, urbanization, and individualism. Williams concludes by contrasting a feudal ethos of service with a working-class ethos of solidarity, rooted in democratic institutions like trade unions and cooperatives. Later, in *The Long Revolution* (1961), he redefines culture beyond traditional liberal views, presenting it as a dynamic and interconnected set of

social practices. Williams argues that art and literature are not isolated ideals but part of broader societal processes that shape shared meanings. His approach emphasises the fluid relationships between culture, politics, and everyday life, focusing on negotiation, conflict, and change. In *The Sociology of Culture* (1982), Raymond Williams defines culture as a system of meaning through which society is communicated, sustained, and understood. He argues that culture is not limited to elite art or rare objects but includes both formal expressions and the lived experiences that shape them. This perspective highlights the dynamic and complex interactions between symbolic representations and everyday life.

Raymond Williams further refines his concept of cultural intentionality by incorporating Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony. He describes hegemony as a dominant framework of values, meanings, and practices that shape everyday life and appear naturally accepted, thereby securing consent and reinforcing control. Unlike ideologies imposed from above, Williams sees hegemony as deeply embedded in lived experience, forming what is commonly understood as 'common sense.' He values Gramsci's approach over Lukács's idea of totality because it highlights both dominance and the potential for resistance. Williams uses hegemony to connect three cultural layers: lived experience, documented cultural expressions, and selectively preserved traditions. The power of dominant culture, he argues, lies in its ability to incorporate these layers through institutions like education, which function as tools of ideological influence. Williams believed that domination happens through varied processes of incorporation that are performed by agencies defined by Althusser as 'ideological state apparatuses'.

Williams further believes, “Working class movements can similarly retain a revolutionary impulse while taking on new political identities under transformed conditions of work” (Harvey 92). Therefore, ideological processes play a pivotal role in shaping culture.

It has to be noted that Raymond Williams supports emerging social movements that are focused on issues beyond class, such as environmentalism, nuclear disarmament, and women's rights. Despite a shift by some radicals toward neoliberal or pragmatic approaches, Williams remained committed to the Marxist belief that exploitation consistently fosters class awareness and collective organization on a global scale. In his 1973 essay "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," Raymond Williams challenges the idea that cultural elements are not shaped by any underlying structure. He argues that while the concept of the superstructure had evolved over time, the foundational idea of the "base" had not received the same critical attention. Williams highlights a common tendency to view the base as a fixed and uniform entity that passively influences all other aspects of society, which he believed oversimplified the complexities of cultural development.

On the other hand, Stuart Hall views hegemony as a complex and evolving set of discourses that operate across different social contexts. However, his reliance on the concept of the state tends to narrow the focus of power, potentially undermining the broader cultural dimensions of resistance. By blending Althusser's structuralism with Gramsci's cultural theory, Hall moves away from the idea that culture merely reflects

economic structures. Instead, he maintains the notion of autonomy—of both symbolic systems and individual agency—while still preserving the economic autonomy rooted in traditional Marxist and bourgeois thought. Stuart Hall in his article, ‘What Is This "Black" in Black Popular Culture?’ writes, “I acknowledge that the spaces ‘won’ for difference are few and far between, that are very carefully policed and regulated. I believe they are limited” (Hall 107). Stuart Hall explored how Western cultural representations shaped the identity of non-Western groups, particularly the subaltern. He argued that colonial powers imposed European frameworks to define and control these populations, influencing both their lived experiences and their capacity to resist. Hall emphasized that identity is fluid and continually reshaped through cultural and political struggles, especially within the contexts of colonialism, postcolonialism, and diaspora.

On this note, Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak argues that analysing the subaltern requires awareness of the power dynamics between the writer, reader, and dominant discourse. J. Maggio writes, “Like Said, Spivak wants to expose the complicit nature of literature and the intellectual elite, which often appears innocent in the political realm of oppression” (Maggio 420). However, Spivak believes that the intellectual elite can play a role in the oppressive machinery. Attempts to "empower" marginalised voices can unintentionally silence them, as speaking for them or assuming they can speak independently risks misrepresentation. True engagement is complicated by the fact that subaltern voices are only heard when they conform to the dominant language and logic of Western institutions like academia or the market. This creates an uneven playing field shaped by colonial histories, making genuine representation difficult.

In this context, it is to be noted that in the 1960s and the 1970s, the hilly and forested region of West Bengal named Naxal Bari witnessed a peasant rebellion that was essentially a class struggle. Assisted by the left-leaning intellectuals, the peasants fought against the landlords and demanded better pay. They wanted to challenge the existing hegemony of the landowning class. Mahasweta Devi's writings support and promote the subaltern sections of the society. It has often been found that Mahasweta Devi had sympathy for the landless peasants who fought against the landlords and the state funded oppressive superstructures. Historically, it could be seen that the Naxalites also supported the freedom fighters operating in erstwhile East Pakistan. Although no direct link can be established between them and Gramsci's writings, it is pretty evident that Gramsci's understanding of the civil society and how the political, ideological and economic social planes overlap to exploit the subaltern sections of the society can be found in the Naxal revolution of West Bengal.

Thus, in the war for position, as Gramsci had mentioned in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, it is imperative that the intelligentsia which works for the working class should make the other members of the proletariat aware that the prevailing cultural norms may not be authentic and need to be contested. Furthermore, the bourgeois culture always encourages the social constructs to become agents of oppression and economic domination. Gramsci believes about intellectuals:

Intellectuals of the urban type have grown up along with industry and are linked to its fortunes. Their function can be compared to that of subaltern officers in the

army. They have no autonomous initiative in elaborating plans for construction. Their job is to articulate the relationship between the entrepreneur and the instrumental mass and to carry out the immediate execution of the production plan decided by the industrial general staff, controlling the elementary stages of work.” (Gramsci 14)

In this context, educational institutions, schools, the church and other religious institutions act in tandem with the objectives of the dominant bourgeois class. The aforementioned agents manipulate the beliefs and ideologies and act as a catalyst in the process of exploitation of the working class. Therefore, the working class must analyse their own positioning within the society and consider the national history before believing such narratives. Moreover, the working class must try to overcome the oppressive forces that try to negate the existence of the working class by using cultural hegemony as a tool of imperial power. Jackson Lears observes, “The overall picture that Gramsci provides is not a static, closed system of ruling-class domination. Rather, it is a society in constant process, where the creation of counterhegemonies remains a live option” (Lears 571). On this note, it is important to examine Cultural Materialism propagated by Raymond Williams. Williams felt that culture itself is a productive process and it plays an important role in determining social relations. Furthermore, culture plays a role in the process of how class divisions are made. Thus, Cultural Materialism can be applied to determine gender disparity, racial discrimination, disputes arising out of different nationalities, etc. This perception is important because in works like *Mother of 1084*, *Magic Seeds*, *The Lives of Others*, etc. the state’s hegemonic policies are always justified

by the cultural constructs like educational institutions. Furthermore, it is also pertinent to note that cultural materialists observe that cultures differ from place to place and from person to person. The products that are created within a certain cultural space have the objective of furthering the hegemonic process. Cultural materialists analyse the processes by which the state-sponsored hegemonic agencies try to manipulate canonical texts in order to serve their own vested interests and validate certain values of the cultural space. Although no such direct example can be given from the selected works, it is important to note that the state-funded hegemonic forces always try to validate their actions by citing policies, rules, regulations, etc. Anyone who opposes the state-funded repression is branded a terrorist and killed by the police. This oppressive attitude of the state forms the backbone of the plot in the selected works and thus, it is important to investigate the thought pattern of the state agencies and the way they try to rule the citizens of a nation state. Raymond Williams further added that culture is not entirely determined by an economic base. Rather, culture influences the social space and often becomes the site of an ideological struggle or conflict. In the selected works, it can be seen how culture becomes the epicenter of an ideological struggle. The challenges faced by Jemubhai, Biju or Ammu within their respective social or family spaces are examples of the ideological conflicts that eventually alter their individual life's courses.

According to Gramsci, Cultural Hegemony is a complex concept. It cannot be defined singularly as a monolithic intellectual praxis that comprises politics and policies. On the other hand, cultural hegemony is also not a set of values that can be equated with ideology. Cultural hegemony actually involves a complex set of relations that are a result

of the existing social strata within the society. The social class system and the social strata distinguish one social class from another. The socio-economic demarcations often ensure a cohesive social process. Gramsci believed that this apparent façade of social order is bound to crumble and eventually, when the marginalised sections of the society start questioning the dominant narratives, the inequality will vanish and the ideology of the ruling class will gradually cease to exist. Gramsci defined cultural hegemony as, “Spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group” (Gramsci 12). Thus, it can be clearly seen how the dominant group controls the factors of production and imposes its will on the subalterns. The dominant group imposes control with the help of the intellectuals. “The intellectuals are the dominant group’s ‘deputies’ exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government” (Gramsci 12).

The term subaltern was first used by Antonio Gramsci in his *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. He used the term to describe the groups and classes that were socially inferior and had no ideological prowess. According to Gramsci, the only way to counter the hegemonic powers is to ensure that the intelligentsia takes the lead in empowering the working class. The scholars, academics, teachers and others should come forward and help the working to analyse the underlying conditions that are at play within the capitalist social space. Gramsci also distinguishes between the intellectuals of the bourgeoisie and the intellectuals of the proletariats. The intellectuals of the proletariats are the opponents of the cultural and social status quo while the intellectuals of the bourgeoisie are the proponents of the cultural and social status quo. The bourgeoisie always wants the status

quo to remain because the social conditions favour their economic condition.

Since these various categories of traditional intellectuals experience through an *esprit de corps* their uninterrupted historical continuity, and their special qualifications, they thus put themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group. This self-assessment is not without consequences in the ideological and political fields; consequences of wide-ranging import. The whole of idealist philosophy can easily be connected with this position, assumed by the social complex of intellectuals, and can be defined as the expression of that social utopia, by which the intellectuals think of themselves as “independent” [and] autonomous, [and] endowed with a character of their own, etc. (Gramsci 7-8)

Gramsci's influence could be felt in movements across the globe. One such example can be given of the political movements happening in West Germany in 1967. The leader of the German student movement Rudi Dutschke used Gramsci's definition of cultural hegemony to emphasize the necessity of the ideological position in order to determine the social positioning of different classes. Later, in 1970, Louis Althusser described the complex relationship existing among the different organs of the state that are responsible for the dissemination and transmission of the dominant ideology to the marginalised sections of the society. Althusser defined these agencies as the Ideological State Apparatuses and these state apparatuses are nothing but the sites of ideological

conflict among the different classes of the society. Unlike the Repressive State Apparatuses that comprise the military and the police, the Ideological State Apparatuses promote the ideological domination through persuasive means.

The Ideological State Apparatuses have a fluid entity among the social sphere. They are the sites of the social struggle. They are not monolithic structures like the RSA but they are the sites where the modes of production are present. Thus, they affect the different classes of the society. The different Ideological State Apparatuses are the Church, the family that is headed by a patriarch, the education system, the different forms of media, literature, arts, the judiciary, etc. The different media forms such as the cinema, literature, arts, etc. are often exercised by the ruling class to propagate their ideology.

Althusser further commented that the parliamentary structures of the state are agencies for promotion of ideological domination as well. In this context, the political parties play a significant role. The concepts of free choice, freedom and equality given in modern welfare states are nothing but distorted versions of the forms of ideological domination.

As already stated, the Gramscian concept of hegemony owes its origin to Marxism. Marx believed that there is a third face of power that is invisible in nature. This invisible power actually refers to the pervasive power of ideology, values and beliefs that go a long way in establishing class relations. Marx felt that economic exploitation was not the only kind of exploitation in Capitalism. Instead, the exploitative system was reinforced by the ruling class through a set of ideas and values that led to the theory of

‘false consciousness’ propagated by Engels. According to Marxist thought, this ‘false consciousness’ ensured that the working class does not recognise their oppression. In fact, the working class is made to believe that the oppression is actually for their good. This concept of false consciousness is inherently a part of the theory of power according to the Marxist line of thought. Lenin further stated that the power of the bourgeoisie was so intense that the proletariat could achieve a state of trade union consciousness at the maximum. In fact, Lenin gave an analogy where the workers are happy accepting the breadcrumbs that fall off the table. The workers cannot even think of occupying a seat at the table. Therefore, improving the conditions of the working class under a capitalist system is nothing but a myth.

Gramsci further developed this idea when he was imprisoned by Mussolini. In his *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci mentions ‘hegemony’ and the ‘manufacture of consent’. Gramsci felt that the capitalist society comprises of two overlapping spaces – one, the political society while the second refers to the ‘civil society’ that is administered and maintained through consent. The civil society is a public space where the trade unions and political parties take advantage of the political system and make profit out of the hegemonic stages manufactured by a capitalist system of production. The ideas and beliefs are manufactured in such a way that the bourgeois hegemony is reproduced in cultural life through the agencies of education, religion, social institutions. These agencies also provide a state of legitimacy to the entire exploitative capitalist system.

The theory of Cultural Hegemony advocated by Gramsci had far-reaching effects because according to him, a direct war of attack could only have limited impact. It cannot entirely influence or control the means of production. This war of attack could only be successful if there is a control over the ideas and beliefs that could result in the birth of a new form of hegemony.

Gramsci's response to this hegemony was the advancement of a counter hegemonic struggle that involves promoting an alternative to what is perceived to be normal. The counter hegemonic narrative has had far reaching effects on social and political movements across the globe. In fact, if we look at resistance and identity movements in India such as the Gorkhaland or the Naxalite movements, we find that Gramscian definition of the counter hegemonic struggle has acquired a centre stage in almost all these movements. Gramsci further mentioned that knowledge is a social construct that is usually manipulated to serve the interests of the ruling class. Knowledge is also used to legitimise the social structures that are in vogue.

Gramsci has actually spoken about the constitution of power that is there in the realm of ideas and knowledge. This power is expressed with the help of consent and not force. Thus, this power is invisible and often more pervasive than the other forms of power that are exercised by the military and other law enforcement agencies.

At times, it often happens that in order to escape subjugation, people migrate to another country although the irony is that they become all the more marginalised in the new host country. Economic necessity, social exclusion and racism are the primary

factors why people migrate.

Gramscian ideas have influenced education policies all across the world. Furthermore, the participatory action research and other approaches to popular media, communication, culture, etc. have been influenced by the Gramscian school of thought. The definition of the Gramscian hegemony has also sparked debate and discussion in the civil society. It is often thought that the civil society can only be defined through a liberal democratic prism. The civil society, according to the Capitalist perspective, is nothing but an associational concept that has got nothing to do with the state and the market forces. However, the civil society can also be a site of struggle for those who counter the ideas and norms propagated by the majoritarian class. The norms are challenged and the civil society is moulded in such a way that the developmental agendas that usually accompany a neo-liberal policy can also be questioned. The civic institutions, as per Gramsci, should be directed to think differently so that the assumptions are challenged and a new, alternate, inclusive narrative crops up.

The concept of Gramsci's hegemony comes from the philosophy of praxis. The philosophy of praxis centres around the foundations of class power. Furthermore, the philosophy of praxis determines the relationship between the base and the superstructure. The three concepts that determine Gramsci's concept of hegemony can be classified as follows:

1. The concept of ideology in Gramsci's Marxism
2. Gramsci's concept of hegemony

3. Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual

The above-mentioned three concepts broadly share the belief that the superstructure of the civil society and the ideology are to be considered only through an economic prism.

Lenin had stressed the importance of political leadership of the working class in the class struggle. Similarly, Gramsci mentioned moral and intellectual leadership and also the importance of non-economic relationship among the various classes of the society. Gramsci also took note of the fact that there was a gulf of difference between the social conditions of Russia in 1917 and other more developed countries of Western Europe. Gramsci felt that ideological struggle was as important as the class struggle that included the economic and political struggle. Therefore, Gramsci can be said to have lent a new meaning to Marxism that was hitherto unknown.

Gramsci also mentioned a concept that was known as the dictatorship of the proletariat. This dictatorship can never be achieved before substantial changes are brought in the spaces of ideology, hegemony, power and other organic individuals. Thus, Gramsci believed that power for the marginalised and subaltern class not only depended on economic factors but was also directly related to the obliteration of the state apparatus and the incorporation of legitimacy on the subaltern class. This could be brought into effect only after an effective ideological struggle and win among the different classes.

Gramsci's concept of ideology was revolutionary and something that was never

discussed by Marxist scholars. Gramsci's outlook was very different from the ideological epiphenomenalism that was practiced before. The ideological epiphenomenalism meant that the ideological superstructure was already constructed with the help of an economic infrastructure. Ideology was nothing but illusory and therefore, it could be safely ignored when it came to analyzing the class struggles of the society or an upcoming revolutionary change. In short, Gramsci's concept of ideology overcame class reductionism. Furthermore, Gramsci suggested that a revolutionary change can only be brought forward by analyzing and utilizing the dynamics and tensions of economic conflicts and contestations that were essentially embedded within the modes of production.

The conflicting relationship among the different forces of production that were in constant relation with the opposing interests of the different classes gave birth to an ideological space. Furthermore, an ideological formation could be noticed among the social fabric and the different social classes. Gramsci also foresaw that the capitalist class would eventually crumble because of its own faulty laws of economy and the encouraging trend of proletarianisation and the marginalisation of certain social classes. This situation could only be reversed by the active participation of the subaltern social class and the ultimate overthrowing of the social apparatus that have been exploiting the marginalised people. State power has always been used to exercise control and determine the factors of production among the various social classes. The overthrow of the social apparatus can only be achieved if a genuine upliftment of the proletariat can be realised. The established hierarchy of the various ideological, economic and political interests can be reversed and only then, a true social transformation can take place. Thus, it can be said

that state power is nothing but an agency of true coercion and exploitation of certain classes and this exploitation is done to satisfy the vested interests of those in power.

Before the advent of Gramsci, ideology was often defined as having a class character. Therefore, different classes had different ideological patterns. The capitalist class had a certain ideological pattern while the working class had a certain ideological space. The two ideologies of the working and the capitalist classes were inimical towards one another. They were exclusive and did not gel. Thus, there was a common perception that the ideological disparity was exclusive and had no bearing on the class struggle. Thus, ideology was considered to be subservient towards social and political changes. However, Gramsci believed that ideology was an important part of the social changes, and it has to be factored in while considering and investigating the social dynamics of the society. Gramsci overcame the notions of epiphenomenalism and class reductionism and added the concept of ideological struggle. Thus, politico-ideological discourses are common in Gramsci's definition of class hegemony and struggle.

Gramsci's defined ideology combines different practices, principles and dogmas. Gramsci's ideology concerns individual subjects as well as different institutions. The ideology comprises individuals as subjects and also agents of change. The agents depended on economic factors that were at play at the production level. Thus, ideology also played an important role in the overall running and functioning of the society. An organic crisis can crop up if the production system does not run on equal terms. In a struggle of power, ideology can prove to be decisive power. Gramsci believed that the

class struggle is essentially linked to class hegemony and state power.

Antonio Gramsci's concept of ideology defined ideology as a mix of various practices, principles, dogmas, etc. that have an individual characteristic. The same social agents that try to manipulate ideology have an economic colour. Therefore, in a nutshell, it can be said that ideology had a role to play in the factors and within the process of production. Furthermore, from a macro perspective, ideology also influenced the social structure of the society. Ideology was primarily responsible and relevant in the struggle for power when other factors and agencies of control failed. So, ideology is mainly used in a last decisive moment. Thus, as per Gramsci, ideological struggle was inherently linked to class hegemony and state power. Gramsci's definition of hegemony and the role ideology played in it helped overcome class reductionism. Thus, it was possible that in the ideological plane, different classes could co-exist and overlap. Thus, the various ideological spaces were characterised by various ideological discourses that solely aimed at generating and encouraging a certain hegemonic thought process of a particular ruling class.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Gramsci's definition of ideology contained his notion of 'organic ideology'. Ideology, therefore, could be defined as a system of class rule or hegemony that combined everything into something that Gramsci called as an 'organic ideology'. Thus, when it came to governance, it could be seen that a hegemonic class exercised state power through its economic superiority and through its ability to articulate, express and convince the subordinate classes of the society the

benefits of a certain ideological discourse. Furthermore, an organic ideology is diffused through the civil society that consists of institutions such as the Church, family, educational institutions, media, the legal system, etc. Although these institutions are varied, they are bound by a common thread of interest and that interest is that of imparting the concept of a certain ideology on the subordinate classes of the society. It can also be seen that these institutions have a certain tendency to form a unified and common ground of socio-economic relations that will serve the interests of the ruling class. Thus, ideological discourses can be classified as a class and they are more than ideology per se. Thus, ideological discourses often become class discourses.

An organic ideology cannot function without the help of organic intellectuals who form a section of the hegemonic class or they want to become a hegemonic class. The organic ideology is usually formed by the organic intellectuals with the help of an articulating principle that intends to unify the different ideological elements from the discourses of various subaltern groups and then, that becomes a hegemonic principle. Thus, it is often found that two individuals of different classes can promote the same ideological discourse that eventually gives birth to a completely different class that is based on an ideological plane. This ideological absorption helps in the formulation of new social spaces. Based on this premise, it can also be argued that in order to overthrow the hegemonic class, the subaltern group could take help of intellectuals who are capable to build a circulate a certain ideology that could be strong enough to counter the dominant group. Therefore, it is imperative that the subaltern group should develop organic intellectuals who can absorb the different ideological layers of the society and in

addition to that, the intellectuals should be able to understand the nuances of the various hegemonic system that are at work within the social space. However, it is also to be noted that the subaltern classes need to have their own power and space to advocate such an ideological discourse. The hegemonic system may not be conducive to allow the development of such alternative space of intellectual discourse.

Furthermore, it is often found that the organic intellectuals have a certain kind of allegiance towards the hegemonic class or towards a class that is aspiring to gain hegemonic status within a particular social space. Usually, these organic intellectuals help in the formulation and spreading of the organic ideologies. In short, the organic intellectuals are nothing but spokespersons of the hegemonic class. It is because of the articulation of the organic intellectuals that the ideological elements that are contained in an organic ideology gradually acquire a hegemonic class character.

The definition of hegemony first appeared in Gramsci's *Notes on the Southern Question* (1926). There it was mentioned that hegemony is a system of class alliance where a hegemonic class exercised its political power through various agencies over the other subaltern classes. The definition was made with particular reference to Italy. The proletariat has to respond and free itself from the clutches of the capitalist corporations. Furthermore, the proletariat had to take the initiative and take the lead.

Furthermore, in the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci mentions that it is time now to look beyond a simple class alliance. The need of the hour is to ensure that the intellectual and moral leadership steps up and guides the proletariats.

Gramsci further commented that it is often assumed that the hegemonic class takes into consideration the interests of the subaltern classes that are subjected to hegemonic control by the ruling class. Secondly, there is an element of equilibrium that exists between the ruling class and the subaltern classes and the ruling class at times, compromises in order to ensure that their corporate interests are not affected. Hegemony mainly refers to the economic leadership rather than a political one. Thus, the corporate and capitalist economy is the main dominant factor. Thus, it can also be said that the classes in a hegemonic state are situated at two opposite sides of the poles. Thus, there is a hint of polarisation in a hegemonic state. Furthermore, a clear binary is also indicated where the individual is the owner or non-owner of the means of production. Thus, hegemony operates on the economic, political, moral and emotional levels all at once. The hegemonic class aspires for a vanguard role where it can dictate the terms and conditions of the state policies. The coercive policies are exercised in a very subtle manner where the subaltern classes are expected to follow the expectations of the ruling class. Gramsci further elaborates on the concept of hegemony in his views on the concept of power.

The power relations are primarily based on two things: *Dominio* or coercion and *Direzione* or consensus. These two concepts determine the power relations. The state of balance or the state of equilibrium is maintained between the social forces through *dominio* and *direzione*. The relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is also influenced by the aforementioned *dominio* and *direzione*.

Gramsci further stated that the society consists of a coalition of classes that again forms an organic totality. Within this organic totality often emerges an organic crisis that at times may affect the hegemonic position of the particular ruling class. Furthermore, coercion often gives way to consensus where the subaltern classes are expected to express their consensus and support the ruling class. Gramsci mentions that consensus lies primarily within the civil social space and so, any form of revolution can only happen if this element of consensus within the civil society is overthrown. On the other hand, coercion is mainly exercised by the law enforcement agencies and the military. Thus, it can be explained that consensus establishes a relationship between the political society and the civil society. Gramsci defines this relationship as equilibrium. The various institutions namely the church, marriage, family, the judiciary, etc. help maintain the equilibrium. On the other hand, the coercive organizations function with the help of the police and the military. A state usually functions with alternative emphasis on force and consensus and thus, maintains a hegemonic system successfully. Thus, in *The Lowland*, we find how the paramilitary kills Udayan ruthlessly. “She remembers the voice of the paramilitary, speaking through the megaphone. Walk slowly. Show your face to me (Lahiri 230).” It is pertinent to note how the repressive agencies of the state alters human relationships. Udayan’s mother “talks to herself, to no one. Tired of waiting, she waits some more” (Lahiri 230). She knows that her son won’t come back again. The manipulation of the masses could be found in other instances as well. In *The Lives of Others*, “the Ghoshes ran their business – planting lumpens within unions to spark off violence so that all the union workers could be sacked” (Mukherjee 393). The

bourgeoisie attempted to suppress the voice of the proletariat by nefarious means with an intent to influence the will of the masses. Furthermore, the members of the proletariat are often made scapegoats. They become victims because they cannot control the means of production. Madan the family servant is accused of stealing. “Bhola consoles his mother with equally empty words. ‘Ma, what good is all this crying going to do? The Inspector can’t be lying. If he says Madan-da has stolen, then he must have reason to say so. We couldn’t counter any of his arguments’” (Mukherjee 447). Thus, the subaltern class is always at the receiving end.

It often happens that in a hegemonic system, the subaltern class has to challenge the dominant class and must try to attain hegemony in the civil society by addressing the concerns of the proletariats. Herein comes the predominance of consent and the legitimacy of power. Gramsci’s definition of ideology helps us to understand this better. It also helps us to realise the dynamics of power struggle within a space of crisis. Gramsci believed that hegemony, which is nothing but predominance by consent is a state where the majoritarian class exercises its control over the realms of politics, intellect and morality. This is further emboldened by a common world view or an organic ideology that is nothing but a representation of a hegemonic perception.

The changes take place on the ethico-political space and the economic sphere where it is found that intellectual and moral reform can only be achieved through a transformation of the ideological narrative and re-formation of the existing hegemonic institutions and values. Furthermore, this reformation of the hegemonic perception into

an alternate world view can only be achieved through a collective will of the proletariats.

Gramsci felt that the new world order is nothing entirely new. Rather, the new world view is influenced by the new ideology that is thrust upon the subaltern classes by the ruling class. It can be said that the world order is moulded or created by the ruling class to suit their vested interests. In *Mother of 1084*, we notice how “people of all creeds had the unlimited, democratic right to kill these young men who had rejected the parties of the establishment” (Devi 19). This is how the subaltern discourse is manipulated. The core influencing factor is the ideological struggle that is manipulated by the hegemonic class. Mahasweta Devi further questions, “Why doesn’t a single person raise his voice when thousands of young men are still rotting in the prisons (Devi 78)?” The hegemonic or ruling class absorbs, rearticulates and assimilates the ideological elements in the discourse of other social classes and tries to form a collective will. The articulated collective will become the hegemonic principle of the emerging hegemonic classes and their presence within the hegemonic system. Jhumpa Lahiri comments in *The Lowland*, “A few months ago he’d been brought in for questioning. It had become routine by then, for the city’s young men” (Lahiri 126). In *The Lives of Others*, the same oppressive state apparatus can be found. The police during a raid say this about the members of the Ghosh family: ““You can’t trust these fuckers Found him! Found the bastard (Mukherjee 464)!”” The language used by the police points towards the repressive nature of the state. A counter point can be found in the same novel. “Dipankar had studied the movement’s self-defeating tactics, its lack of coordination, its unrealistic ideology” (Lahiri 341). Thus, the hegemonic influence can be found in both ways. Furthermore, it is also easier for the

ruling class to use the ideological apparatus because ideological elements may be present in multiple classes and there is no strict compartmentalization of the ideological plane. The ideological consensus may be present in multiple classes and thus, it becomes easier for the ruling class to exercise their control and domination.

It is also to be noted that the general discourse of the subaltern classes is gradually made to believe that the ideological apparatus that is thrust upon them is meant to do good to them. The concept of organic ideology appears here where it can be found that the ideology is formed after absorbing the various other ideological elements that belong to multiple classes and not any class in particular. The 'predominance by consent' advocated by Gramsci is nothing but a common worldview. It is a product of the civil society and a rule by consent or hegemony is a legitimisation of the exploitation of the subaltern classes by the ruling class. On the other hand, taking cue from the above discussion, it is also imperative that the proletariat takes initiative and gives birth to a leadership that aspires to subvert the world view and bring in a new political order. This should be the strategy of any revolution that involves class struggle. Therefore, leadership is very crucial in a revolution that can usher in the ideological angle. The proletariat must first become politically conscious. They must adhere to the tenets of revolution suggested by Gramsci. The working class must attain leadership and state power. They should also be in a position to dictate the terms of the cultural order or space.

The proletariat must first recognise their own economic interests that are relevant to them in the present day context as well as in the future. Furthermore, the proletariat

must also try to benefit the other oppressed groups. Only then the proletariat can forge a new world order and view and eventually establish itself as a political party in the real sense of the term. It can then assume a progressive and historical role and address the concerns of the other oppressed groups and classes. At this point begins the struggle for an alternative hegemonic space that is dominated by the proletariat.

Gramsci's definition of hegemony is especially relevant to the post 1923 political order in Western Europe and Italy. Gramsci also noted the differences in the conditions between Russia and Italy during the period. The class struggle thus becomes redefined as a war of position. The war of position is mainly aimed at gaining the state of hegemony. This war of position takes place within the civil social space. Once the proletariat becomes conscious of its rights and intellectual leadership, the hegemonic dominance will gradually fade away. Furthermore, other social classes will also follow suit and the established hegemonic order will vanish slowly. The role of the leadership must dedicate itself to fight against the existing hegemonic system on all the three levels of society: the political, cultural and the economic spaces. The struggle of the proletariat is not merely historic. It is also a political as well as economic and this struggle straddles through multiple levels to overthrow the established hegemonic system.

The proletariat wants better living and working conditions which a Capitalist economy may not be able to give them. The proletariat wants to enjoy better wages, better working conditions and better perks. The demands of the proletariats gradually lead to the formation of trade unions. However, the mere formation of trade unions may

not be able to overthrow the dominance of the bourgeoisie. However, this economic struggle, according to Gramsci, has to be combined with the political struggle. The resultant struggle is not just a mere class confrontation. It symbolises a complex relation of the different market and social forces that are at play. The other factors that are responsible for such a struggle are the social forces that are related to the forces of production, the political forces that determine the degree of consciousness within the various social groups and finally, the involvement of the state military that can influence the decisive moment of a class struggle.

The struggle of the working class that initially concerned only around economic interests gradually moves into the political sphere and the war of position starts getting defined from the cultural as well as the ideological prisms. During the ideological struggle, the proletariat tries to combine the objectives of the economic, political and intellectual spaces and thus, the struggle becomes a representation of a social group and not just an economically marginalised group. Gramsci also mentioned that this struggle involved a disarticulation and re-articulation of the existing ideological norms. Therefore, it can be inferred that the struggle between the various ideological elements gradually gives way to a struggle of an all-encompassing ideology that was called organic ideology by Gramsci. It is quite clear that Gramsci's idea of ideological struggle should never be analysed through a reductionist prism. Gramsci's perception is not closed, rather, he has always prescribed an encompassing belief that takes into account the economic, political and cultural fronts. It is not just a struggle between two antagonist classes. Rather, it would be prudent to say that the struggle is between two hegemonic principles that are

fighting for the appropriation of ideological elements. This struggle for appropriation of the ideology will result in the disarticulation of the existing cultural contours and give birth to a re-articulation of a new cultural space that would be more accommodating and tolerant. This new plane may also serve as the new platform of a new consensus or a new hegemony. Thus, the connection between ideology and hegemony can now be established and furthermore, it can be said that hegemony is a dynamic process that re-forms after a certain frequency.

According to Gramsci, the process of disarticulation and re-articulation should be strategically implemented to overthrow the existing the bourgeoisie where the working class remains subaltern within a civil society. Gramsci mentions that once the war of position is won by the working class, the latter will come out of its subaltern existence.

Gramsci further argues that the proletariat can become a hegemonic class either by transformism or by expansive hegemony. Transformism refers to the gradual absorption of active elements who came from the antagonistic classes. This principle basically refers to a passive consensus. On the other hand, expansive hegemony refers to direct consensus that concerns itself with the genuine adoption of hegemonic status through the war of position.

The proletariat should strive to attain a state of self-nationalisation. Expansive hegemony also refers to a collective national and popular will that caters to almost everyone in the civil society. This popular will that Gramsci talks about also involves the discourses that existed among the subaltern classes. The terms 'nationalism' and

‘patriotism’ have to be re-articulated according to Gramsci because they address the essential links between the different strata of the society. The proletariat must also learn how to realise their aspirations and objectives. Furthermore, their loyalty and consensus have to be analysed and studied.

For Gramsci, the organic intellectual is very important in the social context. Gramsci believed that the intellectual does not only refer to the scholars or artists but also the organizers of culture who can dictate the terms within a certain social space. The organic intellectuals may involve the captains of the industry, bureaucrats, politicians, etc. On the vertical dimension, there are people who specialise in organising industry for the capitalists. On the horizontal dimension, there are the traditional intellectuals as they have been called by Gramsci. These intellectuals are not directly related to the economic spaces of the society. They do not really belong to any social class and they do not adhere to any particular political or class discourse. The organic intellectuals belong to that social group which had originated within the domain of the factors of production. Thus, any capitalist society creates its own organic intellectual. The organic intellectual lends his expertise in the economic field that subsequently gets reflected on the social and political spaces. Furthermore, the organic intellectual identifies himself with the dominant class. The organic intellectual is therefore, different from the traditional intellectual in certain respects.

Gramsci made the distinction between the horizontal and vertical dimensions on the basis of interconnected areas of the superstructure. The superstructure mainly

involves the political and the civil social spaces. The experts of the vertical dimension will serve as the link between the civil society and the economic forces that are at play within the civil society. They operate mainly within the industry. The directors of the industry also come from the civil society and they may not be experts in industrial specialization. Gramsci is clearer as to the relevance of the intellectual of the horizontal dimension that can be found in the space of the superstructure. Thus, the organic intellectuals provide the required manpower and personnel for the exploitative and coercive agencies of the civil society. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, we find Biju's thought process being manipulated with. "Saeed was kind but he was not Paki. Therefore, he was OK? The cow was not an Indian cow; therefore it was not holy? Therefore he liked Muslims and hated only Pakis? Therefore he liked Saeed, but hated the general lot of Muslims (Desai 76)?" The exploitation of illegal immigrants is validated by the state. Biju protests the treatment of his employer. "'Without us living like pigs,' said Biju, 'what business would you have? This is how you make your money, paying us nothing because you know we can't do anything, making us work day and night because we are illegal (Desai 188).'" The intellectuals help in the validation of such exploitation.

Traditional intellectuals on the other hand, try to talk to the masses and gain their trust. Traditional intellectuals try to obtain a spontaneous, collective consent in the social order. However, it has been noted that in a class struggle the organic intellectuals try to obtain direct consensus often bordering on coercion. Their struggle is a clear war of position because they want to consolidate the hegemonic position of the class with which they are familiar with.

Gramsci further argues that the intellectuals are the deputies of the dominant group who hold important positions in the government and within the social hegemony. The organic intellectuals are the most important because they are the ones who are instrumental in spreading the organic ideology. Thus, in *Magic Seeds*, we find Willie getting demotivated after he joins the revolutionaries. He feels, “I have never known such boredom. Ever since I have come to India I have known these terrible nights of boredom” (Naipaul 51). The so-called intellectuals of the movement are perverted individuals who do not have any clear vision regarding the revolution. Willie further says, “Most of my time in the movement, in fact nearly all my time, was spent in idleness. I was horribly bored most of the time” (Naipaul 155). Moreover, the organic intellectuals are normally members of the progressive class who have the capability to win over the intellectuals of the other class and eventually, they will be able to maintain a system of solidarity among the different social strata.

The organic intellectuals are pivotal for the success of a particular class’ struggle for hegemony. The main task of the organic intellectuals is to maintain and encourage the dominance of the subaltern classes and furthermore, to assimilate and manipulate ideologically the traditional intellectuals. Thus, we find that Brati’s family members, other than Sujata, hold the opinion that “Individuals and gangs of killers had equal rights to kill these faithless young men. They could be killed with bullets, knives, hatchets, spears, with any weapons whatsoever. They could be killed anytime, any place for any spectator present” (Devi 20). The state often manipulates the perspective of the society towards an uprising, thereby, legitimizing the killing of people. “They were all sentenced

to death. Anybody was permitted to kill them. People in all the parties, people of all creeds had the unlimited, democratic right to kill these young men who had rejected the parties of the establishment” (Devi 19).

The assimilation and conquest of the mass become easier to achieve if the organic intellectuals can penetrate other social groups ideologically. It is also to be remembered that the traditional intellectuals can act as supporters of the organic intellectuals whose main aim is to develop that spontaneous collective consent within the social order. Thus, it should be noted that to ensure a hegemonic win, it is always advisable to influence the traditional intellectuals. Only then, a class can establish its hegemony over others. The struggle for assimilation of the traditional intellectuals involves a ‘war of position’ within the civil society. The caste system portrayed in *The God of Small Things* is a case in point where the mainstream society despises the Paravans. Mammachi’s attitude towards Velutha is reflected in the following lines:

She thought of her naked, coupling in the mud with a man who was nothing but a filthy coolie. She imagined it in vivid detail: a Paravan’s coarse black hand on her daughter’s breast. His mouth on hers. His black lips jerking between her parted legs. The sound of their breathing. His particular smell. Like animals, Mammachi thought and nearly vomited. (Roy 257)

The casteist hegemony is prevalent throughout *The God of Small Things*. Vellya Paapen is taken surprise when Mammachi pushed him. “Part of the taboo of being an Untouchable was expecting not to be touched” (Roy 256).

Gramsci further feels that historically, it has been noticed that the proletariat and the working class in capitalist economies have mostly relied on its own traditional intellectuals. Most social groups develop their own traditional and organic intellectuals but conventionally, the working class has depended on its own traditional intellectuals for the leadership roles. To address this problem, Gramsci suggested a solution. He mentioned in the *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, that the solution lay in providing technical education as well as education in the humanities to the working class so that a member of the working class will not only become a specialist but also a director who will have the ability to manipulate the war of position. Only then, politicians will be born out of the working classes who can then, influence the social positioning of the existing hegemonic classes. Kiran Desai observes in *The Inheritance of Loss*, “Are we allowed to become doctors and government workers, owners of the tea plantations” (Desai 158)? Desai here is referring to the Gorkha population. Gramsci, in this context, suggests that a higher consciousness of class can then be developed and cultivated among the working class. Thus, it can be said that Gramsci carried forward Marxism on multiple levels. He developed concepts such as the organic ideology, organic intellectuals, civil and political societies, etc. Furthermore, he distinguished between the economic parameters of the society and the civil and political social spaces. He also defined hegemony in the context of the social space. Gramsci brought new insights into the already existing corpus of dialectical Marxism. In fact, it can be said that Gramsci’s theories have added relevance to Marxism in the present era of Capitalism and the social ills that are associated with capitalism. It can always be safely assumed that Althusser’s views of ideological state

apparatuses are based on Gramsci's theory of hegemony and his general perception of the civil society and the war of position. The implicit participation of the state in the ideological war as stated by Althusser is a direct borrowing from Gramsci's theories. Althusser's ideological struggle is a direct deduction from Gramsci's war of position. Althusser can be said to be an able disciple of Gramsci just like Lenin was to Marx.

The contribution of Gramsci is said to be his arguments related to the strategy that the proletariat needs to adopt to overthrow the existing hegemony. He also made valuable contributions when he analysed the working of the capitalist class and the proletarian revolutionary techniques. Gramsci was always of the opinion that the proletariat cannot win this war of position on its own. In *The God of Small Things*, we find Velutha being ostracized. "“That Paravan is going to cause trouble for you”, he said” (Roy 278). This was spoken by Comrage Pillai, the local political leader. Thus, the proletariat has to take the help of other social classes and develop its own organic intellectuals. Therefore, the need of the hour is to overcome dogmatism and narrow-minded interest based corporate culture. All these beliefs were revolutionary in Gramsci's times. Gramsci's arguments have lent a picture of reality to the existing class antagonism and the capitalist crisis as defined by Marx.

Gramsci also deserves to be appreciated because he was the one who revived Marxism after Marxism suffered in the hands of the critics of the Stalinist period. Needless to say, the working class has been given a weapon that they can use against the social ills brought forth by capitalism. The proletariat can certainly re-create history if

they follow the footsteps of Gramsci.

However, Cultural Hegemony is complex and there are several associated factors that can affect a state of hegemony. The people who are fighting against the hegemonic agencies themselves may not be sincere about the cause. In *Magic Seeds*, Naipaul comments about the rebel leaders “They want blood, action. They want the world to change. All we give them is talk. That is Kandapalli’s legacy” (Naipaul 117). The irony about being a revolutionary is evident when Naipaul observes, “Once you learn about boredom in the village you are ready to be a revolutionary” (Naipaul 82). Therefore, Cultural Hegemony needs to be analysed from a multi-layered prism.

The analytical outcome of the present chapter can be summed up as follows. After a thorough examination of Gramsci’s views on cultural hegemony, it can be said that the concept is fluid and can manifest itself through several ways. The dynamism and organic nature of cultural hegemony is important because the six selected novels present different and diverse time and space situations. The characters positioned in very dissimilar contexts cannot be examined through a linear prism. It has to be seen how the characters in the novels respond very differently to the hegemonic situations that they find themselves in. Furthermore, it is also important to take note of the various authorial stances because helps in identifying and comparing the varied points of view that come out during the present research. The next chapter focuses on the cultural alienation of the characters since they fight against the oppressive forces of domination and in the process, they are left alone, bereft of support from the family or the social space.

Chapter: Four

Cultural Alienation

This chapter analyses all the six novels that the thesis focuses on and examines the characters who undergo experiences of cultural alienation and isolation because of their ever evolving situations and surrounding circumstances. The characters often experience turmoil and convulsion because of the social factors that have a bearing on their lives. The social factors are again caused by socio-political and identity movements such as the Naxalite revolution and the Gorkhaland movement. It is interesting to note that the six novels chosen by the researcher present the Naxalite and the Gorkhaland movements from different prisms. A novel like Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084* focuses on the state atrocities and crimes committed by the law enforcement agencies. The novel also explores the miserable condition of the educated middle class young men who are almost forced into taking up arms against the state because of the latter's exploitative policies. The discussion veers towards the cultural alienation of Sujata from her family after the death of her son. In Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, a character like Velutha is subjected to unspeakable misery and mishaps that ultimately lead to his death. Velutha and Ammu's love affair and the subsequent social reaction to it expose the deep caste divisions that are present in the social space of contemporary Kerala. Thus, Velutha and Ammu are culturally alienated from the rest of their social space because of their love for each other. A novel like V.S. Naipaul's *Magic Seeds*, on the other hand, examines the absurdity of the revolution that takes place in the novel. The

revolution mentioned in *Magic Seeds* takes place somewhere in the southern part of India and is most likely a reference to the Naxalite revolution that is active in some of the southern states of India. Naipaul appears to point out the hypocrisy of the Naxal cadres who are more interested in satisfying their own vested interests. They are least bothered to take notice of the hapless villagers who struggle to make ends meet in the novel. Like Sujata of *Mother of 1084*, Willie too is culturally alienated from the rebels with whom he has teamed up. In Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, a different revolution comes into the picture. Desai examines the Gorkhaland movement that aims to provide a separate identity to the ethnic Gorkhas living in the Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts of West Bengal. Like the other selected novels of the thesis, *The Inheritance of Loss* too focuses on the mental and psychological trauma and turmoil that the characters experience. The characters are culturally alienated because of their diasporic existence. Sai and Gyan's love affair fails because both the characters are from different ethnic backgrounds. The retired judge also lives an isolated life because he too is unfamiliar with the emerging turmoil that has been happening in the region that is already at the cusp of various geographical and anthropological strains. The characters in *The Inheritance of Loss* experience sense of isolation and diasporic crisis as well. Thus, a character like Biju literally runs from pillar to post to find a social identity. He struggles to regularise his papers and legalise his stay in the US. In Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* we find the assimilation of a micro crisis in a macro space. The micro crisis takes place within the Mitra family of Calcutta who are ultimately torn apart because of the Naxalite revolution that struck Bengal in the late 1960s. Thus, like all other Jhumpa Lahiri's

novels, the characters are stuck in a diasporic rut. Their crisis is augmented by the fact that the shadow of the Naxalite revolution still looms large indirectly over their lives even when the physical revolution had ended many decades back. Gauri feels culturally alienated in her new family space and so, she devotes her time to academics and research. Thus, the convulsion of the social space leaves an indelible mark on the lives of the characters and affects them. In the last novel undertaken by the researcher, *The Lives of Others* by Neel Mukherjee, the Naxal revolution again comes into play. In this novel as well, the novelist examines the contemporary Ghosh family and finds out how the family dynamics is affected by the contemporary Naxal revolution. Thus, like *The Lowland*, the novelist offers a peek inside the micro space of a family that in turn, leads the reader to the macro environs of the Naxal revolution. In the process, the reader also gets a chance to witness the different shades of the Naxal revolution. The realistic portrayal of the Naxal movement exposes the cultural alienation of a character like Supratik. It also provides an insight into the macro social environs of the period. The relationship dynamics, the problematic of allegiances affect the protagonists and therefore, the convulsion of the self occurs that eventually lead to a process of transformation and an opening of a volley of possibilities.

The observations recorded in this chapter will eventually lead to an examination of how the self is transformed through the course of the novel. The next chapter titled “Transformation of Self” continues the same line of discussion and throws light on how the characters in the novel are transformed after undergoing crisis, both on the individual and social planes. Therefore, the two chapters are connected thematically.

In the following paragraphs, a thorough discussion has been made to analyse how the characters in the selected six novels undergo a process of turmoil because of various socio-economic and political factors that are further aggravated by identity and political movements like the Gorkhaland and Naxalite movements respectively. Since the thesis takes the help of Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, the discussion also takes into account how cultural hegemony can be located within the chosen novels. The thesis also tries to determine how hegemony operates on different planes and at times, comes from the very people who oppose the hegemonic influences of the dominant class. The novels demonstrate hegemonic influences and at times, they even elaborate the Gramscian definition of hegemony. Therefore, the following analysis takes into account the different possibilities that Gramscian hegemony can acquire. The chapter also tries to delineate how the definition of hegemony is not simplistic and can be, at times, very complex.

Mother of 1084: Mahasweta Devi has always been keen to get involved with the subalterns in the contemporary society. She has been sympathetic to the downtrodden and the marginalised through her writings and never misses an opportunity to expose the caste-ridden, gender biased society that thrives on oppressing the marginalised. She lived her life when Bengal was politically boiling during the 1960s and 1970s and perhaps, the then political environment nourished her perceptions and outlook. Hence, her experience of the Naxalite movement was intensely personal and that got reflected in her works.

Mahasweta Devi's most famous work *Hajar Churashir Ma* or *Mother of 1084* is

a heartbreaking story of a loving mother named Sujata who is suddenly informed of her grown-up son's death. Brati, now identified only as corpse no. 1084, has ceased to exist as a living individual. *Mother of 1084* is a critique of the police atrocities that happened in Bengal in the second half of the last century. The state sponsored pogrom has been exposed by Mahasweta Devi in her work. After her son's death, Sujata decides to know more about Brati's involvement with the revolution. Thus, she meets some of Brati's fellow revolutionaries to get a firsthand account of the life that her dead son had lived before his death. *Mother of 1084* is a telling commentary on the atrocities committed by the state machinery on the peasants in Bengal during 1970s and its rippling effect on the revolutionaries' families. *Mother of 1084* displays Mahasweta Devi's literary maturity that empowered her to experiment with compressed plot and narrative technique. The plot of the novel is a psychological sketch of a mourning mother, who instead of drowning her son's memory in tears, keeps his ideal alive. The plot revolves around Sujata, the mother of corpse number 1084.

Sujata feels at ease in the company of her younger son, Brati who, unlike her other children, is full of ideals. Sujata comes to know of the facts behind Brati's sacrifice exactly two years after her favorite son's death that coincided with his birthday. The death of Brati, who is now known as corpse no. 1084 in police circles, instigates the learning process of Sujata that continues till the end of the novel involving her in a series of meetings and encounters with the people whose cause Brati had campaigned. Through the character of Sujata, Mahasweta Devi passes a scathing rebuke on the persecution of the hapless and innocent in the name of governance. At the end of

the novel, Sujata discovers herself drifting towards a kinship with her son's ideology. Carlotta Beretta believes that the character of Sujata undergoes a process of self-realisation. She moves from a micro to a macro plane. In fact, "Sujata, the mother of Brati Chatterjee represents the anguish of all mothers who bear the pain of seeing their children suffer in the hands of the state" (Beretta 69).

In a way, Sujata's meeting the persons after her son's death is a kind of a confrontation. Her visits facilitate her understanding of Brati and she undergoes a process of self-realisation. After her process of self-realisation is over, Sujata is in conflict with the world around her. So far, she had been forced to adjust herself to the patriarchal social codes and conducts. She had inadvertently surrendered to them as they had gone deep inside her psyche. Through her struggle to understand Brati's revolutionary commitment as a Naxalite, Sujata recognises her own alienation as an individual from the complacent, hypocritical and corrupt feudal society her son had so fiercely rebelled against.

Brati had always been culturally alienated from the rest of the society. "But Brati had built another Brati with his beliefs, his ideals and his ideology" (Devi 57). The quoted line refers to the cultural isolation of Brati before he joins the Naxals. The hegemonic influence, in the words of Gramsci, of the upper class and the state agencies took a toll on the contemporary youths like Brati and they rebelled.

Brati, in his youth was always different from the others. "But Brati did not come under any of these categories. All that Brati could have been charged with was that he

had lost faith in the social system itself” (Devi 17). Thus, it is evident from the lines that Brati had been culturally alienated all along. He had lost his belief in the system. In the words of Gramsci, common sense starts to prevail when the state wants us to believe and trust the narratives propagated by it. However, Brati did not have faith in the social system as mentioned in the quoted lines above.

Critics like Ilina Sen believe “Mahasweta Devi’s writings on tribal life are intimate and clearly identify the state and its agents as violent oppressors of the people” (Sen “Remembering Mahasweta Devi”). Mahasweta Devi is a hardcore feminist and her feminism is born out of her experiences and encounters with the prevailing patriarchy of the contemporary social space. Some other critics like Urmil Talwar believe that Mahasweta Devi’s

oeuvre subverts the grand narratives of colonialism, patriarchy, caste system and class division. She depicts the fate of women who are twice colonised and victimized in the Indian social system but resists the term feminism as she proficiently displays the exploitation of the lower class and tribal men as her emphasis is on class and not on gender. (Talwar 218)

It is to be noted that *Mother of 1084* was written from a middle class perspective. Both Brati and Sujata come from middle class families. Hence, it does not come as a surprise to the reader that the pretensions and affectations of middle class morality are embedded in characters like Dibyanath Chatterjee, the head of the family. Dibyanath

controls the “beautifully organised household” (Devi 30) like a boss. Dibyanath believes that the focus of the family should be “respectability, comfort and security” (Devi 15). Therefore, when Brati joins the Naxalites, the other family members frown upon his decision. This again shows why Brati and his mother Sujata were culturally alienated from the rest of the family. This cultural alienation gave rise to a convulsion of the self of the characters. Gramsci had mentioned, “Hegemonic formations take place among social and political forces” (Kipfer 120). In *Mother of 1084*, the same connection can be observed. The social and political forces combine to produce a hegemonic formation. Brati’s father and his peers cannot identify themselves with the political affiliation of Brati. That gives rise to a tension. Dibyanath even bribes the police so that the media does not get an inkling of Brati’s death. Dibyanath does this to avoid any kind of association with the revolutionaries because he firmly believes that the revolutionaries are misguided youths who will repent sooner or later. When Brati is killed by the police, his memory is soon erased and he is relegated to a position of non-entity. Other than Brati, the only exception is Sujata who cannot feel one with the middle-class bourgeois ideology of the other family members. Sujata undergoes a process of self-understanding after her son’s death. She starts visiting her son’s comrades and their families. When she visits the family of Somu who was Brati’s comrade and was killed on the same night, she comes face to face with the different kinds of hardships that families face. When Sujata meets Somu’s mother, she realises that Somu’s death has caused immense hardships to the family because Somu was the sole breadwinner of the family. Although, on one hand, Sujata shares the same grief as that of Somu’s mother, the former realises

the divisions that come out of different classes. This anxiety and alienation from the rest of the characters ultimately compel Sujata to lose her faith in the middle-class space that she shares with her other family members. On a micro level, Sujata realises that her husband has not always been loyal towards her. This realisation slowly percolates to the development of her psyche when she builds a thought process that remains hostile to the codes of conduct of the middle class people. With this alienation, she also starts developing a close affinity with Brati's former comrades who gave their everything to nourish a society that comprised of fake people and their pretentious demeanors.

Mother of 1084 completely sympathises with the Naxalite cause unlike other novels on the same movement such as *Magic Seeds* and *The Lives of Others*. While Naipaul's novel criticises the Naxalites mercilessly for their lack of ideological commitments, Neel Mukherjee raises doubts on the sincerity and intentions of the rebels. There are some similarities between *The Lives of Others* and *Mother of 1084* though. Both the novels reflect a typical middle class morality that denounces the rebellion and champions social security. Adinath, the father of Supratik, the protagonist of *The Lives of Others* fails to notice the subalterns and their downtrodden lives. Supratik, like Brati, on the other hand rebels against his own family and joins the Naxalites guided by his conviction to the cause of the poor. However, Neel Mukherjee, unlike Mahasweta Devi, paints his protagonist in a shade of grey. Thus, we find authorial doubts creeping into the plot when the Naxalite movement is described in *The Lives of Others*.

Mother of 1084 unanimously reflects the Naxalites in a positive manner and the novelist categorically chastises the society for being prejudiced and biased towards certain classes. Mahasweta Devi sincerely believed that the Naxalite movement failed because traitors had penetrated the rebellion and were acting at the behest of the state machinery. Mahasweta Devi also believed that the contemporary intellectuals were reluctant to get involved and as a result, the movement soon lost its momentum. The masses of the contemporary society could not identify themselves with the lofty goals of the movement and soon, the movement lost its ability to grow and spread. Through the character of Sujata, Mahasweta Devi wants to present a transition from personal to political. Indeed, Sujata discovers her political calling after her son Brati dies in police custody. Uma Parameswaran believes,

In her gradual comprehension, we see one mother's grief reaching out to so many other mothers' grief, and we see the human aspect of a chapter of Indian history, regardless of which side one might be on.
(Parameswaran 458)

Out of the void in her personal life, comes out a new political awakening that is filled with possibilities at the end of the novel. Thus, the legacy that is left by Brati is ultimately taken by his mother Sujata who gets involved with the rebels' cause. The bond between mother and son was noteworthy. "For Brati alone Sujata had defied her husband and her mother-in-law" (Devi 31). Thus, even within the small space of family, both Brati and Sujata were culturally alienated. Through this, Mahasweta Devi actually

portrays a rebellion of a woman who, all along her life, was confined to the four walls but who is now emancipated. She transcends the personal shackles and aspires for a greater political good for the society – the same dream that Brati had before his death. Thus, Brati's death becomes a kind of metaphor, imbued with endless possibilities of a new beginning.

Antonio Gramsci's definition of the subaltern is not an isolated idea. His idea of a subaltern subject is mixed with his political, social, literary, cultural, familial, philosophical, religious and economic factors. Gramsci believed that a subaltern subject actually undergoes a mix of repressive factors that are determined by other socio-political, economic factors. Interestingly, Gramsci had, in his first notebook, referred to the idea of subaltern in a very literal sense; that of a junior member of armed force. Later, Gramsci developed the idea of subaltern and felt that other associated factors play a dominant role in moulding the individual who is defined as subaltern. For Gramsci, the state consists of both political society and civil society. Political society, in this instance, comprises the elements of the limited notion of the state or the idea of a juridical-administrative state: government, the military, the police, the judiciary, and so on. Likewise, in *Mother of 1084*, we find the Gramscian notion of multiple factors that go into affecting the self of the protagonist. The state is responsible for Brati's death. The political class and their activities affect the civil society as well. Thus, we find Brati's mother Sujata undergoing a series of tumultuous experiences in her personal after the death of Brati. The self and situations get intertwined and somehow, Sujata, who all along had been an apolitical person, starts developing a political outlook after

the demise of her son. Therefore, the political, social and personal planes overlap just like Gramsci had defined in his *Prison Notebooks*.

After the textual analysis of *Mother of 1084*, we have reached an outcome where we can clearly see the turmoil experienced by the protagonist. The process of gradual realisation that Sujata experiences, slowly moulds her and she begins to understand the cause for which her son and his other peers died. This convulsion of self gradually leads to a transformation of her thinking process. The next chapter titled “Transformation of the self” will focus on how she is a changed woman after her son’s death in police custody.

The God of Small Things: It is often found that the social space of India is characterised by various forms of disparities. Although in today’s age, equality is advocated with much zeal, caste based domination and marginalisation of certain communities are found to be present. Usually, the women and people from the lower sections of the society are the most vulnerable to social and economic exploitation.

The southern state of Kerala is one such example of a caste-ridden society. Although to a certain extent, the caste-based exploitation has been addressed by the successive Communist governments, it can be said that subjugation of certain communities still exists in the state. Therefore, multiculturalism is still a distant cry in the state. The result is frequent cases of friction among communities and an underlying tension that is ever prevalent. Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* is a microcosmic representation of the social milieu of Kerala. The Ayemenem House where most of the

protagonists live is a place where a strict caste system is in place and age old conventions rule. The conventions, needless to say, are exploitative and discriminatory in nature. The patriarch of the family Reverend E. John Ipe is apparently a social reformer since he has initiated a school for the untouchables. But ironically, in his own personal sphere, he discriminates against certain communities. He is over conscious of the reputation of his family. The Reverend has full faith on the moral codes of conduct that have prevailed over the society for ages. He refuses to grant freedom to the women of the house. His wife Aleyooty Ammachi is a victim of this patriarchy. Ammachi never quite liked or respected her husband. Her attitude towards the Reverend is evident through these lines:

Aleyooty Ammachi looked more hesitant. As though she would have liked to turn around but couldn't. Perhaps it wasn't as easy for her to abandon the river. With her eyes she looked in the direction that her husband looked. With her heart, she looked away. (Roy 30)

The quoted lines show how Ammachi was alienated even within her family space. This cultural alienation had stayed with her throughout her life. The alienation was primarily due to patriarchy. Here, within the family space of the Ipes, the Gramscian definition of the 'dominant class' comprises of the male members. The portrait hanging on the walls reflect the deep sense of patriarchy that prevails in the Ayemenem House. The patriarchy that is propagated by the Reverend is inherited by his son Pappachi as well. Pappachi too is concerned about the family's 'reputation' and is thus, against the granting of freedom to the females of the house. So, we find the female characters such as

Ammu and her mother Mammachi are at the receiving end of male chauvinism. Mammachi yields to the male domination but her daughter Ammu rebels against this. Chacko, Ammu's brother enjoys liberties that Ammu cannot. Furthermore, Arundhati Roy shows how Chacko exploits the women workers in his factory. Mammachi, despite knowing all this, tacitly approves of her son's conduct. "She secretly slipped them money to keep them happy. They took it because they needed it. They had young children and old parents. Or husbands who spent all their earnings in toddy bars" (Roy 169). Mammachi has even built a back door for Chacko's room so that he could silently enter and exit the room without anyone knowing it. "Mammachi had a separate entrance built for Chacko's room, which was at the eastern end of the house, so that the objects of his 'needs' wouldn't have to go traipsing through the house" (Roy 169).

The novel also focuses on the contemporary political apparatchiks. Chacko, one of the protagonists, is a member of the Communist Party. The Communist Party's mandate is supposed to protect the rights and liberties of the marginalised sections of the community. But as a member of the Party, Chacko exploits the women workers of his factory. The inherent corruption in the Communist Party can be understood through the character of Chacko. Furthermore, Chacko's misdeeds go unnoticed because he is a member of the majoritarian Syrian Christian community. Thus, he is never challenged by anyone. The Syrian Christian community enjoys a hegemonic influence over the contemporary religious space of Kerala. Thus, the novelist's gaze falls on the religious space as well. Moreover, Chacko's victims remain silent because they are poor and cannot afford to lose their jobs in Chacko's factory. They know that if they protest, they

will be thrown out. Thus, Arundhati Roy seems to suggest that exploitation operates on several levels: economic, social, political, religious, etc. The Ipe family showcases how corruption and immorality breeds within the closed doors of the family. Mammachi encourages her son's illicit relations with the factory workers, but she holds on to conventions and supports age-old patriarchy when it comes to her own daughter. Ammu is never given the liberty to decide the course of action of her personal life. The so-called social conventions are arbitrarily applied on the different individuals. The hypocrisy is revealed through these small, yet meaningful occurrences within the plot. Ammu, on the other hand, faces subjugation in the hands of her brother Chacko. Her insignificant presence within the household compels her to rebel and chart her life's own course of action. Chacko also doesn't hesitate to beat Ammu when the former comes to know her relationship with the Paravan, Velutha. "Get out of my house before I break every bone in your body (Roy 225)!" The quoted sentence by Chacko shows his extreme patriarchy and misogyny. Roy seems to support Ammu's rebellion against the hypocritical society and corruption that has set deep inside the contemporary social and political spaces.

The Ayemenem House is home to different generations. Thus, we find characters like Mammachi, Baby Kochamma, Ammu and Rahel as representatives of different times. These characters also uphold different value systems. To cite an example, Baby Kochamma continuously rants about the virtues of the Ipe family. Her statements reflect the biased attitude that she possesses towards certain communities that are conventionally considered to be inferior. Baby Kochamma, herself at the age of eighteen, fell in love with Father Mulligan, an Irish monk. However, her unrequited love makes her frustrated

and she harbours an ill feeling towards Ammu when the latter falls in love with Velutha.

The novelist very successfully analyses the complex thought process of the characters. Her subtle way of portraying the sense of anguish and frustration that Baby Kochamma experienced when her love for Father Mulligan was unrequited is poignant. She gets enraged when she comes to know of Ammu's feelings for Velutha. She distorts their affair before the police and presents Velutha as a villain and criminal. Her regressive mindset is also reflected through her feelings for the twins Rahel and Estha. "Baby Kochamma disliked the twins, for she considered them doomed, fatherless waifs. Worse still, they were Half-Hindu Hybrids whom no self respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry" (Roy 45). Thus, the cultural differences within the Ipe family can once again be proved through the quoted lines above. It appears through the narrative that she is jealous of Ammu because the latter is independent minded and is capable of taking her own decisions. Unlike Baby Kochamma, Ammu can decide her own fate without the assistance of the male family members. Thus, the readers can understand how the Ayemenem House stands as an epitome of moral wrongdoings, patriarchy, male chauvinism and intolerance.

The character of Ammu has been very poignantly painted by Arundhati Roy. Ammu has all along been a clear-headed person who is conscious of her emotional as well as her sexual needs. However, since she is a woman, she is relegated to a subordinate position within the Ayemenem House. She is not allowed to pursue higher studies. According to her father, "a college education was an unnecessary expense for a

girl” (Roy 38). Pappachi’s prejudice against education of women shows that he is a typical Syrian Christian who is orthodox in his values. From the novel, the reader can understand that basic human rights such as the right to education can still be a far cry for certain communities in India. Ammu’s feelings for Velutha however, speak of a possibility, the possibility of love that can transcend territorial, social and communal boundaries. Even after her marriage, Ammu’s lifestyle reveals a change from the otherwise primitive lives that the other residents of Ayemenem House lived. “She wore backless blouses with her saris and carried a silver lame purse on a chain. She smoked cigarettes in a silver cigarette holder and learned to blow perfect smoke rings” (Roy 40). Thus, it is evident that Ammu was a rebel from the very beginning. Her cultural alienation can be easily gauged from these lines. She was a rebel just like Velutha who was, in his own space. However, her marriage was not a happy one since she soon discovers that her husband was exploitative in nature as well. He harasses her mentally and even tries to gain favour from his boss by trying to send Ammu to his boss, Mr. Hollick’s house. Perhaps, the character of Ammu is autobiographical. Arundhati Roy’s mother too married a Bengali man who was exploitative in nature. She had to leave him and raise her daughter amidst much trying circumstances.

Ammu’s husband’s violent behaviour is evident from lines such as “Suddenly he lunged at her, grabbed her hair, punched her and then passed out from the effort” (Roy 42). Ammu’s reaction to her husband’s beating is also significant. “Ammu took down the heaviest book she could find in the bookshelf. The Reader’s Digest World Atlas – and hit him with it as hard as she could. On his head. His legs. His back and shoulders. When he

regained consciousness, he was puzzled by his bruises” (Roy 42).

The decision of hers to return to Ayemenem House disturbs the existing equilibrium there. She was unwelcome because her presence with her two kids at the house was something that the other inmates of the house could not reconcile themselves to. “Ammu left her husband and returned unwelcomed, to her parents in Ayemenem. To everything she had fled from only a few years ago. Except now she had two children. And no more dreams” (Roy 42).

The attitude of Ammu’s family members reflects the conventional Indian perception towards a divorced woman. She is neglected by her own parents. She is, in a kind, ostracised from the society. She is again pushed into a marginalised existence. However, since Ammu is a rebellious character, it is no wonder that she is attracted towards Velutha. The attraction is significant because a Dalit like Velutha has no place in the Ayemenem House. It appears as if Ammu is no longer interested in men from her own class or community. The novelist seems to suggest that Velutha, although illiterate, is more sincere than the educated Syrian Christians who are nothing more than hypocrites. Velutha, on the other hand, is a rebel as well, just like Ammu. He is ready to transgress the social boundaries for the sake of love. Like Ammu, Velutha too is marginalised. Roy, the novelist seems to suggest that both Ammu and Velutha were destined to be together.

Although, initially Ammu was reluctant to fall for the charms of Velutha, at the end, she decides to think beyond the cultural constraints and caste barriers. Thus, their

union signified a time when “the unthinkable became thinkable and the impossible really happened” (Roy 31). Their union is possible because both Ammu and Velutha belonged to the same class – that of the marginalised. As soon as their relationship comes to the fore, they are harassed by their respective family members. Velutha is arrested and tortured at the police station. The novelist’s scathing criticism also falls on the law enforcement agencies. When Ammu rushes to the police station to meet Velutha, the inspector Thomas Mathew insults her. “He stared at Ammu’s breasts as he spoke. He said the police knew all they needed to know and that the Kottayam police didn’t take statement from ‘veshyas’ or their illegitimate children” (Roy 8).

Roy’s purview of criticism covers the political leaders as well. Comrade Pillai, the Marxist leader, too doesn’t approve the relationship between Ammu and Velutha. It appears as if everyone wants the two to be punished for charting their own course of love.

Velutha is falsely charged with causing Sophie Mol’s death and is ultimately killed in police custody. Ammu too dies an anonymous death in Alleppey where she had gone to attend a job interview. “She was thirty-one. Not old, not young but a viable, die-able age” (Roy 161). She is the victim of class injustice, patriarchy, age-old regressive customs and hostile family members. The ignominy of Ammu’s death is brought to the fore through the lines: “Would future generations say, ‘There was Ammu – Ammu Ipe. Married a Bengali. Went quite mad. Died young. In a cheap lodge somewhere” (Roy 223).

The love between Ammu and Velutha forms a parallel world that doesn’t wait for

social approval. The parallel world refuses to accept the norms of love dictated by the social mainstream. Yet, by positioning the different love affairs against the love between Ammu and Velutha, the novelist seems to highlight how Ammu's love for Velutha was pure. Uma Parameswaran believes, "Roy uses both political and social constructs to argue that desire is worth dying for" (Parameswaran 33). When Velutha is arrested by the police, Ammu goes to the police station to meet him. Unlike their love, Chacko exploits his factory workers. His is not love but lust. Both Ammu and Velutha realise that their love for each other stems from the fact that both are members of marginalised communities. Both are victims of discrimination for no fault of theirs.

The novelist seems to emphasise that the love life of Velutha and Ammu represents a cultural terrain that should be supported and not criticised. Krishana Bihari argues, "Roy seems opposed to the traditional concept of love, sex and marriage. Ammu has to suffer the punishment for breaking the 'Love Laws'. Her illicit relation with the low-caste Velutha is termed as vice" (Bihari 70).

Arundhati Roy believes that multiculturalism should embody every cultural strain and not just support a singular cultural code of conduct that is based on age old traditions and rituals. The portrayal of Rahel by Arundhati Roy also indicates that the novelist cares very little about clichéd age old conventions. Rahel, like her mother, is socially uprooted and doesn't care for the society. She too charts her own course of love and refuses to accept the established social conventions. Somewhere, Rahel's life is a metaphoric continuation of Ammu's life because unlike her mother, Rahel successfully lives her life

on her own terms.

The subjugation of lower caste people has been narrated by the novelist in numerous instances in *The God of Small Things*. Vellaya Pappen could not get his sons admitted to an English medium school because of his Dalit caste. Furthermore, he could not get medical attention for his wife when the latter needed the most. Similarly, Vellaya could not render any medical help for his son Kuttapan who was a paralytic.

As mentioned in one of the introductory paragraphs, Arundhati Roy's focus falls on the contemporary religious space as well. It is an irony that Velutha's ancestors had embraced Christianity in order to escape subjugation. When the British arrived in Malabar, Velutha's grandfather Kelan and his friends converted to Christianity with the hope that they will now be granted social acceptance. However, on the contrary, that did not happen and they were treated with utmost contempt even within the Christian community. The discrimination faced by the converted Christians in the hands of the Syrian Christians is reflected from the lines: "They were made to have separate Churches, with separate services, and separate priests. As a special favour they were even given their own separate Pariah Bishop" (Roy 74). The quoted lines show the cultural alienation of the converted Christians among their peers. Gramsci believed,

Religion and common sense cannot constitute an intellectual order, because they cannot be reduced to unity and coherence even within an individual consciousness, let alone collective consciousness. Or rather they cannot be so reduced "freely"—for this may be done by

“authoritarian” means, and indeed within limits this has been done in the past. (Gramsci 631)

The misery of the Dalit Paravans was comparable to untouchables. They were not allowed to walk on public roads. They were even forbidden to cover their heads with an umbrella. They were also expected to cover their mouths while speaking lest they pollute the environment with their breaths. They were not allowed to touch anything that belonged to the upper caste Hindus or Christians. The description of the Paravan Christians proves that the condition of the converted Christians is often abysmal and furthermore, the converted Christians are yet to be merged into the mainstream social space. In other words, they were culturally alienated from the mainstream Christian community.

The mainstream Hindu culture is no less responsible for the poor condition of the untouchables depicted in *The God of Small Things*. To cite an example, Comrade Pillai who supports Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, refuses to help Velutha when the latter approaches him for help after being accused a criminal by the police. Although the Marxist leader Pillai claims to support marginalised communities, he never took an interest in saving Velutha because the latter was proving to be a capable party worker.

The novel is full of examples that prove class subjugation. When Vellaya Pappen discloses his son's affair with Ammu to Mammachi, the latter expresses her anger by spitting at Vellaya. “THOO! THOO! THOO! and Vellaya Pappen lying in the slush, wet, weeping, grovelling. Offering to kill his son. To tear him limb from limb” (Roy 256).

The entire social and government machinery seem to be against the marginalised community of Velutha. Inspector Thomas Mathew, instead of helping Velutha, fabricates a story and arrests Velutha. On the other hand, Inspector Velutha helps Baby Kochamma because both are from the upper castes. *The God of Small Things* narrates tales of caste oppression that has prevailed in India over the ages. A character like Velutha is always on the lookout for social equality but in vain. Although he was intelligent and had shown sparks of ingenuity during his childhood, he had to live a pariah life owing to his low caste. Arundhati Roy successfully portrays the character sketches of Velutha and his father Vellaya Pappen and marks the difference between the two. Vellaya had a servile attitude who had spent his entire life in the service of the upper caste people while Velutha is different from his father. Just like Ammu, Velutha is rebellious and refuses to accept his lot. Even his father knows that Velutha is a rebel. “He couldn’t say what it was that frightened him. It was nothing that he had said. Or done. It was not what he said, but the way he said it. Not what he did, but the way he did it” (Roy 76).

Vellaya is contemptuous of the rebellious nature of his son. The father knows that it is not possible to re-write their fate because of their Dalit caste. His son Velutha, on the other hand, doesn’t want to remain oppressed all the time. In order to get a new identity, Velutha decides to join the Communist Party. He believes that the Marxist ideals of equality will help him come out of his Dalit subjugation. But, unfortunately, even the Communist Party of Kerala doesn’t practise what it preaches. Velutha is arrested by the police, tortured and implicated in a false case. Only Ammu remains by his side.

Velutha's trying to come out of his Dalit status spells doom for everyone in the novel. Velutha's feelings for Ammu and vice versa trigger reactions that are not at all pleasant for the two. Their subsequent deaths prove how deep rooted the malaise is. Their dream of a social change fails but at the same time, exposes how social evils and casteism remains etched in India even today. Velutha's victimisation began the day he was born. Jane Poyner believes,

Caste is presented in the novel as highly deterministic. A combination of the narrative's double time frame and the revelation of the story's tragic outcome before its full explanation through analepsis and prolepsis-like the oral storytelling Salman Rushdie describes, it goes in loops and swoops - performs an important ethical function, leading the reader to focus on wider socio-political questions of why Velutha was murdered rather than on how, where, or when this event took place. (Poyner 55)

Velutha was destined to face the collective hatred of the society and condemnation from every corner of the social space. *The God of Small Things* brings to the fore how caste and class hegemony are still present in today's India. Rajeshwar Mittapalli argues,

Indeed, *The God of Small Things* has drawn the attention of the world to some of the persistent problems facing India – problems Roy has been genuinely concerned about – such as untouchability, and exposed

caste-based discrimination. (Mittapalli 40)

The situation is so acute for the Dalits in *The God of Small Things* that even a trivial matter such as the pursuit of carpentry as a profession is out of bounds for a Paravan like Velutha. Velutha and members of his community are only allowed to pursue certain menial work.

The novelist shows how the political system exploits the Dalits to serve their own vested interests. To cite an example, Comrade Pillai uses Velutha to garner the support of the factory workers. But when Pillai feels that Velutha can gradually become more powerful within the political space, he decides to destroy the Paravan's life. Through these incidents, a certain degree of cultural alienation and hegemony surfaces. Arundhati Roy perhaps wants to show that India is still 'colonised' and the country is ruled by certain elite sections of the society who determine the codes of conduct in the social, political and religious spaces. *The God of Small Things* champions for a casteless society that accepts plurality and heterogeneity within the social space. The novel seems to endorse the view that unless the shadow lines of caste based oppression are removed, real progress of the country will remain a distant cry.

The use of the term hegemony was initially used to describe the relationship between city-states. Its use in political analysis was somewhat limited until its intensive discussion by the Italian politician and Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci's definition of hegemony owes its origins to the survival of Capitalist states in the 20th century. Gramsci believed that the supremacy of a class and its associated mode of

production could be obtained by brute force. On the other hand, in certain capitalist societies, the domination was achieved through consensual means as well. The leaders framed a narrative that vouched for the supremacy of certain people who belonged to a certain class. It was believed that these people possessed a superior intellect and they could dominate the other classes. In *The God of Small Things*, we find the same thing happening. Velutha, being a Paravan, had to endure the ignominy of an outcast throughout his life. The other characters such as Chacko believed that he was from a superior caste just because he belonged to the Syrian Catholic Christian community. Furthermore, the leaders of the reigning Communist Party also took the upper hand because they were from a certain political community. Gramsci's definition of the supremacy of class comes into being. It is also to be noted that Gramsci had mentioned some tacit form of domination which is usually achieved through acceptance of certain sections of the community. Velutha's father is an example of that. Although Velutha refused to accept the supremacy of the majority community of the Syrian Catholic Christians, his father had actually accepted his fate and behaved as if he truly belonged to an inferior class and community. Gramsci's cultural hegemony and its several nuances can be thus, observed in *The God of Small Things*. The convulsion of situations ultimately affects the inner selves of the characters.

After analysing *The God of Small Things*, we have reached an outcome where the characters such as Velutha and Ammu experience social subjugation in the hands of the dominant class represented by her own family, the police, the religious and communist leaders. The subaltern characters of Velutha and Ammu fight against all odds and

ultimately die an ignominious death. Their tumultuous lives are projected against an adverse social space. They also transform and are successful in exposing social hypocrisies. The next chapter will focus on how the characters in the novel transform themselves and emerge victorious by exposing the social degeneration although both Velutha and Ammu perish at the end.

Magic Seeds: *Magic Seeds* is a sequel to the novel *Half a Life*. The protagonist of *Magic Seeds* named Willie Chandran lives with his sister Sarojini in Berlin. Right from the beginning of the plot of the novel, we are shown that Willie is not very comfortable with the kind of life that he lives in Germany. He yearns to find a meaning in his life and so, his sister Sarojini arranges for him a trip to India. After his arrival in India, Willie comes in contact with Leftist guerrillas who are active in the southern states of India. From now on, we come face to face with the dilemma of Willie. Although Willie does not fully believe in the Naxalite cause, he is reluctant to leave them because he fears for his life if he were to desert the Naxalites. Throughout his contact with the Naxalites, Willie realises that not all the rebels have a noble character. Many of them are merely frustrated individuals who have joined the movement to avenge their personal losses. Ideological belief seemed to be the last thing in their minds. Anthony Thwaite observes, “Naipaul’s habitual fastidiousness is triggered off by scenes of filth, cruelty, stupidity, mindlessness. In the company of men seeking in various ways to revenge themselves on the world, Willie’s among strangers” (Thwaite 12).

V. S. Naipaul deliberately makes the plot ridiculous by adding certain things in the

plot. For instance, when Willie is arrested and sent to jail, we find that the Indian government suddenly discovers that Willie is an author who has been published in the West. That prompts the government to release Willie. After his release, Willie moves to a London suburb where he readies himself to start a new chapter in his life. He reminisces about his past but even here, we find Willie drifting aimlessly and engaging in casual relationships that are devoid of any long-term goals. The state of flux seems to be constant in Willie Chandran's life. We also come to know that before his arrival to India, Willie had lived in an African country where he married a local. Thus, his character comprises of different cultural strains but nowhere he could settle and live comfortably. One of the things that Naipaul has tried to point with the help of the narrative is the hollowness and hypocrisy of class and caste division present in India. The irony is that the rebels who are apparently fighting against the class division are themselves affected by a casteist mentality. They differentiate people on the basis of their castes and don't hesitate to kill someone if the person is from a different class although the person may be harmless. Naipaul is a big time critic of the Naxalite revolution in India and his *Magic Seeds* is a scathing criticism of the movement. The Naxalites are never shown as saviours of the marginalised. Rather, they engage in every kind of exploitation. Through Willie's interactions with the rebels, the novelist successfully shows the myopic vision of the revolution that apparently believes in the obliteration of class division.

It is because of Willie's sister Sarojini that Willie decides to come to India and join the revolution. From Sarojini, we come to know of Kandapalli, who had inspired the revolution in the southern part of India. However, Willie soon finds out that Kandapalli

and his associates are not necessarily idealists. Many of them joined the revolution because of some expected personal gains. Although the rebels say that they are fighting against the caste-ridden society of India, they themselves are believers in schisms and rifts within the rank and file of the movement. The cultural alienation of the rebels is evident from these lines: “But sometimes they (the rebels) like to come out and talk to people like us and boast” (Naipaul 101). Gramsci had always felt that the dominant authority was the state that was helped by several other agencies. Here, in the *Magic Seeds*, the rebels themselves exploit the people. They believe in some kind of intellectual superiority. Self-interest and personal gains are the only objectives that have prompted the revolutionaries to join the movement. Uday Benegal believes, “Willie’s life proceeds as languorously as before: seven years as a cog in a floundering cause, desultorily making his way through the ranks” (Benegal 1).

Willie remains just a ‘cog’ in the wheel. Throughout his tryst with the rebels, he could never get the opportunity to establish his existence. Throughout the novel, there are instances where people from an upper social class or caste speak despicably about others who are from the lower socio-economic strata. The villagers are often referred to as “cricket people, matchstick people,” whose “minds have gone after the centuries of malnourishment” (Naipaul 42) by the Naxalites. The irony is that the peasants of the villages whom the Naxalites are claiming to protect are wary of the latter’s presence. Ramachandra, one of Willie’s leaders, complains that in the meetings the peasants will agree that their life is unjust but remain impervious when urged to act:

You can get them to clean out water tanks. You can get them to build roads. But you can't get them to take over land. I begin to see why revolutions have to turn bloody. These people will begin to understand the revolution only when we start killing people. (Naipaul 67)

The statement by the Naxalite leader is significant here because it clearly shows his murderous mindset. Furthermore, the sentences show how the rebels are distanced culturally from the masses. Naipaul is at his scathing best when it comes to portraying the Naxalite movement in India. In *Magic Seeds*, we also find the Naxalites divided into several small factions. In a nutshell, it can be said that the Naxalites are only concerned for their own selfish gains and nothing else.

As part of the training process, Willie was sent to camp in the forest. “That night Willie cried, tears of rage, tears of fear, and in the dawn the cry of the peacock, after it had drunk from its forest pool, filled him with grief for the whole world” (Naipaul 43). The lines clearly reflect Willie’s mixed feelings about the Naxalites and their movement. Willie’s cultural dislocation can be gauged from other sentences as well: “When his blood cooled Willie thought, ‘I am among absolute maniacs’” (Naipaul 145). Thus, Willie is not at all comfortable among the rebels.

The incident when Willie is ordered by his commander to murder a wealthy farmer makes Willie realise that the rebels are murderers themselves. Although the victim belonged to the agrarian community, the Naxals considered the farmer to be their class enemy just because the latter was wealthy. “Since the feudal people had long ago run

away, and there was strictly speaking no class enemy left in these villages, the people to be liquidated were the better off” — the only enemy left” (Naipaul 98). Unwittingly, Willie is involved in the crime and so, he is arrested. Willie is in for a rude shock because he sees that the people against whom the Naxalites are fighting are from the communities of the labourers, farmers and the untouchables.

Throughout the novel *Magic Seeds*, V. S. Naipaul seems to stress on the distance between the rebels and the villagers. The following paragraph shows how distinct the alienation is between the rebels and the villagers.

Now there came the order for the squad to get villagers to kill better-off farmers. This was no longer optional, a goal that might be reached one day when conditions were suitable. This was an order, like a retail chain ordering its managers to improve sales. The council wanted figures. (Naipaul 144)

Gramsci never believed in the intellectual romanticisation of any revolution. He said, “Intellectuals are simply a subset tasked to produce a particular organization of knowledge, which in time percolates into a *senso commune* (common sense)” (Crehan 137). Thus, it is not a surprise that we see the revolt in *Magic Seeds* being portrayed without any intellectual glamour.

Throughout the narrative of the *Magic Seeds*, we find the abundant use of irony by Naipaul. We find Willie wearing his Rolex although he is part of a movement that

believes in communist and socialist ideologies. From such usages of irony, it can be safely inferred that Naipaul was against the way the Naxalities conducted themselves in India. He seemed to suggest that the movement has lost its direction and connection with the common people. One of Willie's comrades declares, "We are the new lords" (Naipaul 41). This statement is significant because apparently, the rebels vouch for a classless society although their mindset reflects one community positioned above another.

Naipaul is critical of the government as well. The novelist's criticism of the government almost takes a comic turn when Willie is arrested and sentenced to 10 years in prison. However, Willie is released before the completion of the sentence because the government of India finds out that Willie is a published author," a pioneer of modern Indian writing — who many years ago published a book in England" (Naipaul 173).

The news comes from Willie's publisher and eventually, Willie is released. Thanks to his fame as a writer, he is allowed to leave India and the case against him is brushed aside. The author's criticism of the existential crisis that Willie is trapped into continues even after the latter is released from prison. Willie returns to England but soon finds himself ensconced comfortably into an easy life. Similar to his previous life, Willie is again transported to a life devoid of goals or objectives. The leitmotif of *Magic Seeds* seems to be an existential crisis where Willie is trapped in a vicious cycle of inaction. This inaction is present when Willie was involved with the revolutionaries. This inaction continues when Willie moves to London after he is released from the prison.

The reader of *Magic Seeds* cannot escape certain salient features used by the

novelist. Naipaul deliberately avoids proper nouns. The India where Willie travels is simply 'India'. Similarly, Naipaul desists from giving specific details of the location where the revolution takes place. Similarly, we don't know the names of the states where the revolution is taking place. The town where Willie meets his first contact is also unnamed. So is the airport where Willie lands in South India and where he is supposed to meet his rebel friends. His friend Joseph does not have a last name. We also come to know that Joseph is educated from an English university. It goes without saying that the university is not named. Thus, it can be inferred that Naipaul refuses to provide an identity to the characters in *Magic Seeds*. A kind of existential crisis is actually born out of this reluctance by the author to name places and happenings. Naipaul is of the opinion that the present day individual is constantly trapped within a social space that is experiencing a state of flux. It can be inferred that this state of flux actually aggravates the powerlessness of Willie.

Apart from the absence of proper nouns, the reader also encounters a complete lack of directions. To cite an example, Willie waits endlessly for orders from one of the leaders of the revolution. His waiting for Kandapalli reminds the reader of Vladimir and Estragon's waiting for Godot. Kandapalli never arrives. There is also a communication gap among the other leaders of the movement and among the foot soldiers like Willie and his comrades. Willie attends innumerable meetings where nothing concrete is discussed. Naipaul considers Willie to be the fanatical idealist drawn to what he somewhere calls "pseudo-revolutions" (Atlas). It is to be noted that throughout the narrative, Willie's expectations are never aligned with the Naxalites. The movement lacks goals or

objectives. We come across Willie's disappointment with the revolutionaries in the numerous letters that he writes to his sister Sarojini.

Willie tells Sarojini that he is surrounded by "psychopaths". The daily life of Willie also does not provide any emotional succor to him. When it comes to work life, Willie is among the lowest paid employees at the sugar factory. He is subjected to exploitation of every kind. Throughout his life, Willie realises that his life lacks a purpose. This existentialist crisis can be found throughout the plot of the novel. After his return to England, he gets romantically involved with the wife of his friend. Towards the end, Willie concludes, "It's wrong to have an ideal view of the world. That's where the mischief starts. That's where everything starts unraveling. But I can't write to Sarojini about that" (Naipaul 167). Michiko Kakutani feels,

Willie himself hardly seems like the same man we met in *Half a Life*.

Yes, he's still infuriatingly passive and adrift, but the author's sympathetic understanding of Willie's crippling sense of alienation has been replaced by ill-tempered disdain. In fact, Naipaul now appears to regard his hero as a fool who allows himself to be bullied by his strident sister into joining a Maoist revolutionary group in India.

(Kakutani 15)

Towards the end of the novel, we find Willie living in a house in St. John's Wood. The place is owned by Roger who is a lawyer of dubious reputation. As mentioned previously, Willie gets physically involved with Roger's wife Perdita. The

relationship is devoid of love and is based only on lust. The casual fling with Perdita again points towards the purposelessness of Willie's life. At the end of the novel, the reader finds that Willie has bagged a job in a magazine house that publishes on architecture. He aspires to start his life afresh after so many rounds of misadventures throughout his life. The decision to start life afresh points to the still existentialist crisis that is there in Willie's life.

Even Willie's friends are loathsome. They are essentially narcissists who have nothing worthwhile to do. They are always obsessed with their socio-economic statuses eager to outsmart their peers. Like Willie, they are aimless and lack a purpose in life. One of his friends Roger is involved in a relationship with a woman named Marian. This relationship is also based on lust and doesn't reflect any kind of love whatsoever between the two individuals. Thus, we find the evidence of a depraved life even after Willie has returned to Europe.

Some critics opine that the novel has autobiographical elements. Naipaul seems to suggest that it is not proper to romanticize abstraction and abstract ideals. Naipaul's thought process can be compared to George Bernard Shaw's. In the *Arms and the Man*, Shaw propagated an anti-romantic picture of war and love.

Naipaul seems to advocate that ideology may not be always enough. Naipaul had this notion that it is wrong to impose a pattern on the chaotic realities of life. Miren Karmele Diaz believes,

Magic Seeds shows Naipaul's distrust of the motives and real political commitment of urban middle classes with the revolution and is consistent with some sociological approaches to the movement as a melting pot of spurious interests" (Miren Karmele 84). The word 'spurious' is significant here because it demonstrates Naipaul's doubt about the revolutionaries' integrity and character. Naipaul believed that people should not seek refuge in some idyllic world that is devoid of the realities of life.

Magic Seeds reflects the elements of dissolution, corruption and futility. It can be said that the novel successfully portrays the crisis in the postcolonial world. The image of decay is constant and runs throughout the plot of the novel. In fact, Willie represents the entire humanity of the Postcolonial period. He is always lost in a world that does not provide any space to the 'other'. The desolate world in which Willie Chandran lives is both scary and alarming. *Magic Seeds* also seems to represent that the values of the world are slowly disappearing. Very similar to the existentialist trait in *Waiting for Godot*, *Magic Seeds* contains a pessimism and futility that affect all the characters. It is also to be noted that all the characters seek an answer to their quest for life but ultimately, fail to do so.

No credible rationale can be found in the human life as represented in *Magic Seeds*. This can be defined as an existential crisis that affects the protagonists and the way they handle their lives. Hugh MacDonald feels,

This is not Naipaul being teasingly elusive but indicating the uniqueness, not just of Chandran's but of every individual's search.

This scrabbling for meaning is what unites us all. Even the revolutionary is portrayed as an ascetic, even a saint. (MacDonald 7)

The world shown in *Magic Seeds* is full of contradictions and paradoxes. The actions of the characters actually belittle their existence. In other works of Naipaul such as *A Way in the World* or *The Loss of El Dorado*, the same pessimism and existential crisis can be found. In another work of Naipaul, *The Middle Passage*, the reader comes across nihilism. John Freeman is of the opinion,

This is not the first time a Naipaul narrator has become intoxicated with ideas and gone native, so to speak. The revolutionaries of his 1975 novel *Guerrillas* were equally misguided, but the lens of this book seems more pointedly autobiographical. (Freeman 6)

The characteristics of destruction and desolation can be found in all the aforementioned works. Amidst all the criticism that Naipaul's fiction is marked by certain bleakness, Tunku Varadarajan comments,

Naipaul tells us that social progress can come — and should come — even in the most poverty-stricken milieu, through civilized political suasion, conscious self-betterment and economic growth or at least a belief in the redemptive qualities of economic growth. (Varadarajan 1)

Through the novel *Magic Seeds*, Naipaul seems to suggest that a positive change has to come in the poverty stricken backward villages of India. Naipaul sincerely

believed that the Naxalite movement was an impediment to the progress of India. But he has criticised the government as well. The panic, insecurity and bleakness reflect the miserable condition of India's hinterland which is still steeped within the confines of social ills and maladies. Naipaul seems to suggest that it may not be always possible to change the world. In fact, it may be beyond the might of an individual to change the society. On a macro level, Naipaul felt that organizations or movements that promise change in the social order are often dominated by groups that have vested interests in their minds. Hence, the objectives of these movements are often dubious and should be criticised.

Like *The God of Small Things*, *Magic Seeds* too records the domination of people and the hegemonic influence. Here, however, the cultural domination and repression are carried out by both the rebels and the state machinery. The concept of Gramsci's 'hegemony' is mainly mentioned in his *Prison Notebooks* that were written mostly during the 1920s and 1930s when Gramsci was imprisoned by the Fascist government. Gramsci's hegemony refers to a process of cultural, intellectual and moral superiority. The cultural, moral and intellectual superiority become the weapon by which a certain class of people exercises their superiority. It also implies that the other community that is left behind becomes the marginalised. Gramsci uses the term 'dominant class' that imposes itself upon the other marginalised communities. In *Magic Seeds*, the dominant class can be found in the garb of the rebel leaders such as Kandapalli who has an acute sense of distrust towards the hapless villagers. Thus, through the disillusionment and cultural alienation of Willie Chandran, the reader gets to know who the dominant class is

and how they operate. *Magic Seeds* is essentially a novel about the inner experiences of the protagonist Willie Chandran. Willie undergoes a series of dejections and disillusionments that eventually causes turmoil within him. Perhaps, that is the reason why he is always a drifting person with no specific moorings. The novel is also an awakening for the reader because as per Gramsci, the dominant class is usually the state but here, the dominant class are the rebels as well who ironically, vouch for the protection of the villagers.

After analysing the *Magic Seeds*, we have reached an outcome where Willie undergoes a process of disillusionment with the rebels. After his release from the prison, he goes to London and settles there. The convulsion of self that he experiences while interacting with the rebels and living with the rebels is noteworthy. Initially, he had high hopes about the rebels but slowly, he understands that the revolution is a sham. That eventually transforms his self and this is discussed in the following chapter of the thesis which is focused on the transformation of the lives of the characters.

The Inheritance of Loss: The process of migration is a complex one and the article explores how family relationships undergo changes during and after migration by the characters in *The Inheritance of Loss*. The novel has two parallel narratives — one set in Kalimpong and the other in Manhattan. Both the narratives tell the tales of migration. The first narrative revolves around Cho-Oyu, which is the judge's residence and the other narrative is set in New York where Biju lives on forged papers. The judge lives in the decrepit house and reminisces about his days in England. Biju is always apprehensive lest

he is arrested by the police for migrating illegally to the US. The Kalimpong narrative is set against a time that is plagued by the Gorkhaland insurgency of the 1980s. This article examines the various socio-economic reasons behind the characters' migration and analyses how their decision to migrate affects their family relationships in India.

Desai's characters are positioned within the chapters of sub-continental history. The novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* reflects the effects of geo-cultural complexities that have a bearing on the characters. The narrative is characterised by the fast world of Manhattan where the reader finds "trains passing by in a devilish screaming, their wheels sparked firework showers" (Desai 147) and the other centering in Kalimpong that is rocked by the Gorkhaland insurgency. Donna Seaman believes,

Set in India in a small Himalayan community along the border with Nepal, its center is the once grand, now decaying home of a melancholy retired judge, his valiant cook, and beloved dog. Sai, the judge's teenage granddaughter, has just moved in, and she finds herself enmeshed in a shadowy fairy tale-like life in a majestic landscape where nature is so rambunctious it threatens to overwhelm every human quest for order. Add violent political unrest fomented by poor young men enraged by the persistence of colonial-rooted prejudice, and this is a paradise under siege. (Seaman 26)

The narrator presents a very grim picture of migration as all the characters who migrate fail in their aspirations.

The novel deals primarily with the judge's migration to England as a student and Biju's migration to the US as an illegal immigrant. Biju hopes that his migration to the US will remove his hardships that he faces in India. There are references to other tales of migration as well such as Joydeep and Lola's migration to Kalimpong from Calcutta, Sai's parents' migration to Russia and Father Booty's migration to India as a Jesuit priest. Primarily, it appears that the urge to migrate is propelled by the desire to earn money and therefore, better the standard of living. There is also the sense of social prestige that life in a foreign country provides.

The judge Jemubhai Popatlal Patel was born in 1919 in the town of Piphit in Gujarat. He had received his education from Bishop Cotton School that was located nearby. Jemubhai, as a child, is deeply impressed by the portrait of Queen Victoria. What strikes him is the fact "a woman so plain could also have been so powerful" (Desai 58). In pre-independent Indian society which was largely patriarchal, women hardly enjoyed any kind of freedom. The very fact that England was ruled by a queen impresses Jemu's young mind and his respect for the British becomes stronger. This eventually inspires him to abroad for higher education. Jemubhai is the first in his family to receive western education. Since the young Jemubhai was good in academics, his father wants to send him to England for higher studies. However, money poses a problem and so, he approaches moneylenders for help. Jemu's father sends his son to England but before that, he arranges for his marriage. His father knows that the marriage will ensure a handsome amount of dowry that will take care of Jemu's expenses during his stay abroad. The marriage offer ultimately comes from a rich merchant of Piphit and Jemu gets

married to the daughter of the merchant before his journey to England.

In a negotiated marriage in India, physical looks are very important for a girl and the narrator's observation that Jemu's bride is not good looking makes it obvious that Jemu's father had chosen the girl because of the huge amount of dowry that was to come with the marriage from the girl's side. The entire episode of getting Jemu married is significant from the social perspective. The amount of dowry that Jemu commands by flaunting his selection in England shows the mindset of ordinary Indians who have an inclination to have a foreign educated bridegroom

The dowry included cash, gold, emeralds from Venezuela, rubies from Burma, uncut kundan diamonds, a watch on watch chain, lengths of woolen cloth for her new husband to make into suits in which to travel to England, and in a crisp envelope, a ticket for passage on the SS Strathnaver from Bombay to Liverpool. (Desai 91)

Through flashback narration, we learn how Jemubhai's father-in-law had roped in the services of a military band when Jemubhai boarded the SS Strathnaver to go to England. The grand sendoff that is arranged by Jemu's family proves the hype that has developed around Jemu who is perhaps the first in his village to go abroad for higher studies. His luggage contains a 'choorva', a decorated coconut meant for bringing good luck and his Oxford dictionary. The two items signify the cultural contrasts that Jemu will now be subjected to in the new country.

Jemubhai's possessions indicate the disparate cultural moorings of the character. Jemu does not like the Indian meal that his mother has cooked for him. He feels that his meal signifies his cultural past from where he intends to escape. He feels angry at his mother and so, he starts imitating the Europeans who are his co-passengers. He uses a fork and knife to eat the 'rotis' and 'puris' that he carries with him during the journey. The attempt of young Jemu to eat rotis and puris with a knife and fork showcases his efforts in removing the cultural alienation that he is subjected to while in England. Bhabha's concept of 'mimicry' explains the slippage of Jemubhai from his cultural roots and his subsequent emulation of the British. Jemubhai thinks that by adopting the customs of the Europeans, he can become a member of the ruling class. That will also help him escape from the humiliation and state of subjugation that he has been subjected to till then. He tries to distance himself from his Indian past and so, he throws away the food packet into the sea.

In England, Jemubhai feels the cultural isolation. Although England for him, had been a land of dreams, glory and wealth, he encounters a state of cultural shock when he arrives at Cambridge. The small grey houses were colourless and were nowhere close to the picture that he had envisioned of the host country. Jemubhai is discriminated against and laughed at. He feels neglected and soon, withdraws himself into a shell. He bathes himself regularly when British girls accuse him of smelling like curry. Soon, he becomes obsessed with certain things, like his preference for cloudy days lest the sunlight reveals his 'horrificing' self. These experiences of subordination have an adverse impact on his psyche and when he returns to India, Jemubhai is a changed man. He begins to follow

English manners, their habits and ways of life. By doing so, Jemubhai wants to eradicate his past humiliation at the hands of the British. Jemubhai feels that if he joins the mainstream British by following their customs, he will be able to shed his sense of shame that he had experienced during his student days in Cambridge. He becomes the brown sahib who wants things to be done in a precise and punctual manner just like the British. By following the customs of the British, he commands a position of authority but ironically, that distances him from the Indians as well.

Being a member of the coveted Indian Civil Service, the judge now commands power and prestige of the ruling class. He now employs a Brahmin stenographer. This gives immense joy to the judge because he could now relegate an upper-class individual to a state of servitude where the judge is the master and the Brahmin is the subordinate. C.S. Soong believes,

Desai and her characters wrestle with a variety of social myths and realities. In a small town in north-eastern India, where we find a retired judge, his cook and his orphaned granddaughter, issues of class often arise. The granddaughter, Sai, enjoys chatting up the cook while he works, but upon visiting the cook's hut out back, she is shocked and embarrassed by his poverty. Sai's closeness with the cook draws the disapprobation of Sai's tutor, an anglophilic spinster, who opines, "It was important to draw the lines properly between classes or it harmed everyone on both sides of the great divide." The retired judge is likewise prone to class-based judgments. When he, who was born into the peasant caste, first joined the civil service, how he relished

his power over the classes that had kept his family pinned under their heels for centuries. (Soong 57)

During his service tenure, Jemubhai becomes extremely angry when he learns that his cases are being heard in Hindi. The judge was very particular about his routine that began with the bed tea and ended with a hot water bottle. The judge's fascination for hot water in all the seasons reflected the taste of the Englishman. Furthermore, the preference for bed tea was also reflective of the mindset of the colonisers. Even after retirement, Jemubhai follows the European practice of having the evening tea served with an accompaniment of pudding.

The judge's anglophilia alienates him from his own relatives. Jemubhai's efforts to emulate the British isolate him from his other family members who cannot identify themselves with the European customs and practices. His married life is also affected because the judge is not at all happy with his wife who cannot speak English. Jemubhai wants his wife to be conversant in English customs and manners and so, he arranges an English tutor for his wife but Nimi, is too simple to be able to learn Western ways of living. Thus, there is a gap between the husband and wife that gradually widens over the years. The judge is extremely irritated with his wife's simple ways and he behaves brutally with her. He abuses her physically and forbids her to go out of the house. The judge even sends her to her parental home to get rid of her, where Nimi gives birth to a girl child. At the end, the judge sets her on fire and passes it off as an accident.

After retirement, the judge settles in Kalimpong but his penchant for the British

way of life is still there. Panna Lal, the cook boasts of his ability to “make a new pudding for each day of the year” (Desai 64) which ensures his appointment in Jemubhai’s household. The cook mentions every kind of pudding that he can prepare: “Banana-fritter-pineapple-fritter ... upside-down-raisin-upside-down” (Desai 64). The running together of the names of all kinds of puddings demonstrates the cook’s ignorance of the English language. At the same time, it shows how he is desperate to gain an employment by boasting his ability to prepare puddings, a western delicacy. The judge and the cook, although separated by a huge gulf of difference in their socio-economic standings share the same penchant for western cuisine and customs. This proves their cultural alienation from the rest of their neighbours and peer groups.

Despite following the customs and practices of the British, Jemubhai is not given the access to the British social space and so, he remains as an Anglophile judge who fails to secure a space in either the Indian or British social spaces. Jemubhai Patel is someone who reminds the readers of colonial days when India was under British rule. During that time, an English education promised a bright future for someone who came from an Indian village. Furthermore, a career in the Civil Services ensured a secured future with no financial worries. Post retirement, Jemubhai becomes a shadow of an Englishman who has nothing worthwhile to do but devote his time to his Irish-setter dog Mutt. He never leaves his crumbling mansion Cho-Oyu where he resides. The judge never leaves his house because he feels powerless outside the four walls of the Cho-Oyu. He is so attached to his decrepit mansion that when his old friend Bose comes to visit him, the judge refuses to leave and go and meet him in town. His small world is restricted to the

four walls of Cho-Oyu that also proves his isolated and alienated existence, far removed from the social mainstream.

The other protagonist of the novel, Biju dreams of migrating to the US. He chooses US because he knows that America is the epicentre of power. Biju migrates to the US during the 1980s when Kalimpong is rocked by the Gorkhaland insurgency. He is prepared to migrate to the US at any cost. He finally manages to go to the US on forged papers. His father, the cook, has high hopes for his son and so, he regularly sends letters to Biju enquiring about his wellbeing.

Make sure you are saving money. Don't lend to anyone and be careful who you talk to. There are many people out there who will say one thing and do another. Liars and cheats. Remember also to take rest. Make sure you eat enough. Health is wealth. (Desai 18)

The cook saves money and wants to ensure that Biju faces no hardships in the US. The cook thinks that Biju is doing great in the US. Biju also expertly puts up a mask and pretends that he has become successful in America. He mentions, "The manager has offered me a full time waiter position. Uniform and food will be given by them. Angrezi khana only, no Indian food and the owner is not from India. He is from America itself" (Desai 213). The quoted sentence shows how working for the Americans in the US provides a sense of fulfilment and delight for both the father and son. The excitement with which Biju writes the letters generates the same excitement back in India. For the cook, migrating to the US is the ultimate goal and he believes that a place in the

American society will ensure an escape from the state of subjugation that both father and son are subjected to back in India. The cook enjoys receiving letters from the US because that enhances his prestige among his peers. He therefore, regularly recommends names of people to Biju who are interested to go to the US for work. Kiran Desai, while describing these, reveals the pathetic living conditions of illegal workers like Biju who are at the mercy of unscrupulous employers. He is treated as a second-class citizen in America. “He was surprised to see that there was a whole world in the basement kitchen of New York” (Desai 213). “Whole world” refers to the cheap labour that comes from all over the world to the US to maintain the service industry and sustain the lavish lifestyle of the rich. The quoted sentence proves how Biju’s dreams were shattered and increased his cultural alienation. *The Inheritance of Loss* reveals how life becomes a living hell for illegal immigrants like Biju. Their existence becomes miserable and instead of the luxury that they had dreamt of, they become paupers in the hands of employers who take full advantage of the situation. Through the character of Biju, Desai wants to show how the illegal immigrant workers provide cheap labour to the various New York restaurants and other organisations. Biju and his co-workers are given poorly paid jobs and abysmal living conditions that remain invisible to outsiders. Biju is always changing his workplace lest he gets caught by the police. He lives in filthy conditions and his safety is often jeopardised. Biju believes that the Green Card can solve all his problems:

The green card the green card Without it he couldn’t leave. To leave he wanted a green card. This was the absurdity. How he desired

the triumphant After The Green card Return Home, thirsted for it — to be able to buy a ticket with the air of someone who could return if he wished, or not, if he didn't wish. (Desai 99)

Biju feels that the Green Card will solve the problems of his cultural alienation. With a Green Card, he can become one of the white-skinned Americans. However, all his efforts fail. Biju knows that he is being exploited by dishonest restaurant owners such as Harish-Harry. The owner knows that Biju cannot protest because he has migrated to the US on forged papers. Biju realises that only if he manages to get the Green Card, he will be able to improve his living conditions but getting a Green Card is a far cry because of his illegal immigration status. Although his father feels that Biju is doing well in the US, Biju knows that he is being treated as a second-class citizen and is deprived of even the basic human rights. He recalls, “all American flag on top, all Guatemalan flag below. Plus one Indian flag when Biju arrived” (Desai 21). Biju is astounded when he finds that the basement kitchen is full of people coming from almost every third world country of the world. He finds, “perfectly first world on top, perfectly third-world twenty-two steps below” (Desai 23). The restaurant where Biju works is a microcosmic world space. The hierarchy of social statuses and discrimination is distinct and cannot be missed. The hierarchical order is just another way of expressing the culturally distinct spaces with the American society. The shady underbelly of New York is evident from these lines: “Without us living like pigs. What business would you have? This is how you make your money, paying us nothing, because you know, we can't do anything, making us work day and night because we are illegal.” (Desai 188)

The quoted lines highlight the pathetic condition and cultural alienation that Biju has to experience during his stay in the US. Gramsci believes,

It signifies that the social group in question may indeed have its own conception of the world, even if only embryonic; a conception which manifests itself in action, but occasionally and in flashes—when, that is, the group is acting as an organic totality. But this same group has, for reasons of submission and intellectual subordination, adopted a conception which is not its own but is borrowed from another group; and it affirms this conception verbally and believes itself to be following it, because this is the conception which it follows in “normal times” — that is when its conduct is not independent and autonomous, but submissive and subordinate. Hence, the reason why philosophy cannot be divorced from politics. (Gramsci 632)

The quoted paragraph demonstrates how one group of people considers the others intellectually superior. This is proved in *The Inheritance of Loss* because we find characters like Biju and the judge fantasising about the Western world because they consider the westerners to be intellectually superior.

The intersecting and overlapping axes of differentiation prove that family dynamics and social relations are dynamic. The juxtaposition of the two worlds highlights the need for a re-drawing of the borders of cultural reality. The transnational can no longer be defined within the tropes of national identity. *The Inheritance of Loss*

proves Rushdie's assertion that human identity is both plural and partial. The characters in *The Inheritance of Loss* are situated against the "pull and push of transnational hybridising cultural force" (Desai 98). The novel stresses the importance of contradictory cultural effects on characters who are themselves products of a transforming world.

But it is also to be noted that Desai's principal two protagonists, namely the judge and Biju, fail to assimilate themselves in the host societies of England and the US and ultimately return to India marked by failure in their personal and professional lives respectively. However, *The Inheritance of Loss* does have a positive ending with the return of Biju and his reunion with the cook. When Biju gets to know about the political disturbances happening in Kalimpong, he gets anxious and wants to visit his father. He prepares to leave for India. The closer he gets home, the more unfamiliar he becomes with the surrounding social and cultural spaces. When Sai sees Biju in the evening light, she fails to recognise him and thinks that the figure is of a "bent-over woman dragging one leg onerously. She must be on her way elsewhere" (Desai 324). Alan Cheuse observes, "This is a story of exiles at home and abroad, of families broken and fixed, of love both bitter and bittersweet" (Cheuse 36). *The Inheritance of Loss* examines the subtle layers of interpersonal relationships.

The Inheritance of Loss ends with the victory of love and union between a father and son. There is no material expectation in this relationship. Laura Albritton, however offers a different perspective. She feels,

Yet Kiran Desai has uncovered too much ugliness and too much

ruthlessness in people-both as individuals and participants in larger movements-for these final developments to be particularly uplifting (Albritton 170).

The novel seems to celebrate unadulterated love. The unadulterated love between the cook and Biju that is evident when the two meet each other can be found in lines like the “two figures leaping at each other as the gate swung open” (Desai 324). The final reunion of the father and son reflects an unparalleled filial love that is without any material expectation. The pure love rises “above the parting clouds” (Desai 324) of doubt just like the golden peak of Kanchenjunga.

Looking at *The Inheritance of Loss* from the prism of cultural hegemony, it can be understood that the process of domination operates on multiple levels. The judge faced domination when he was a law student at the UK. However, when he came and joined the British civil services in India, he himself became an agent of domination and started practising and harbouring a sense of cultural and intellectual superiority. The result of this attitude was the marital discord between him and his wife. When Biju migrates to the US, he also faces domination because of his skin colour. Lastly, the Gorkhaland insurgents who themselves are fighting for their identity and against domination by the non-Gorkhas, themselves become exploitative when they rob a poor man like Biju. Again, it is proved that domination as defined by Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* can be problematic. These different sources of domination eventually give rise to a convulsion of self. Furthermore, it can be said that the turmoil within the self of the protagonists

gradually leads to a certain transformation. An example can be cited in the character of Biju. He is finally disillusioned with the material riches of the US and decides to return to join his father in Kalimpong. The turbulent situation in Kalimpong aggravates his return and the convulsion of self that operates on a micro plane is influenced by the convulsion of situations that happen in the wider spheres of Kalimpong and the US.

After conducting a detailed textual analysis of *The Inheritance of Loss*, we have reached an outcome that hints at several possibilities. Biju who once dreamt of getting a Green Card has now returned to India leaving all his dreams behind. There are changes in the judge's character as well. Throughout the course of the novel, we have come across the protagonists pitted against social repression. At times, the oppressed becomes the oppressor himself. Thus, transformation happens within the characters, and they realise that domination can actually happen and operate from several directions. The following chapter discusses the transformation of selves in detail.

The Lowland: Jhumpa Lahiri mainly explores the cultural alienation that arises out of spatial dislocation and emigration. *The Lowland*, her second novel after *The Namesake*, was shortlisted for the Booker in 2013. In *The Lowland*, Lahiri analyses the nuances of human relationships that undergo anxiety and pain because of a different cultural experience in the host country. In *The Lowland*, Lahiri adds the Naxalite movement to the narrative, accentuating the existential, diasporic and identity crises of the characters in the novel.

The Lowland is a novel that centres on a middle-class Bengali family. The novel

spans a total of four generations. Like her other novel *The Namesake*, the narrative shifts back and forth between Calcutta and the US. Stephanie Merritt believes,

The Lowland is a sweeping, ambitious story that examines in intimate detail the intersection of the political and the personal, encompassing nearly 50 years of Indian and American history through the lives of one family. (Merritt35)

Through the novel, the readers get to explore the lives of the characters and their constantly evolving family relationships. Subhash Mitra and his brother Udayan spent their childhood in Tollygunge, a suburban locality of Calcutta. The time period is the 1960s and the decade thereafter that was rocked by the Naxalite movement. The background of the narrative is that of political unrest. In their youths, the two brothers start developing different perspectives and outlook. Udayan becomes involved with the Naxalites while his brother Subhash leaves Calcutta for the US to pursue his graduate studies. The two brothers are spatially separated. The narrative keeps on focusing on the political turmoil happening in Calcutta. The metaphorical lowland of Tollygunge, where life in itself is a struggle is tied inextricably to the protagonists of the novel. After Udayan's violent death in the hands of the police, the Mitra family's dynamics change. After Udayan's death, other members of the family are dispersed, and the nature of their relationships changes. Udayan's pregnant widow Gauri moves to the States with Subhash. The incident is significant because it tells a commentary on the existing social conditions of the society. In those days, being a widow almost meant living a life of

social ostracisation. Furthermore, the fact that her husband was a Naxalite made life worse for Gauri. It is quite evident that not every member of the Mitra family had that revolutionary zeal like Udayan's.

Jhumpa Lahiri is adept at drawing character sketches. Like the other characters in her works *Interpreter of Maladies*, *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth*, Jhumpa Lahiri paints the character of Gauri meticulously. Gauri is reserved when interacting with the other characters in the novel, yet her perspective of life as being reflected in the narrative is marked by dynamism and strength. The process of self-realisation that Gauri undergoes is similar to Sujata's in Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084*. Gauri's inner conflict with her first marriage to Udayan and subsequently, her decision to move to the US with Subhash has a profound impact on her psyche. Furthermore, her experience of motherhood also helps her to understand her own self. Eventually, Gauri becomes a source of tension for Subhash. The actions of Gauri are often debatable, and readers are at a loss as to whether her actions can be supported. While describing Gauri, Jhumpa Lahiri says,

She turned down dinner invitations, offers to have lunch. She kept to herself at conferences, always retiring to her room, not caring if people found her unfriendly. Given what she'd done to Subhash and Bela, it felt wrong to seek the companionship of anyone else. (Lahiri 286-287)

The above quoted lines prove the cultural alienation of Gauri. Her personal life was in a mess. In other words, her extreme convulsion of self ultimately drove her

towards a culturally alienated space. Jennifer Marquardt believes, “The novel provides a compassionate and complex examination of identities that are defined by loss as well as the reconstruction that can – or cannot – take place after” (Marquardt 2). *The Lowland* brings to the fore the complex dynamics of identities and evolution of perceptions that continuously undergo a process of change. The layered plot of the novel ensures that the reader is forced to study the different socio-political factors that affect the progression of the plot. The novelist appears to suggest that the actions of the characters are never solitary. Rather, the lives of the characters are linked with their circumstances and so, the characters have to be studied from a macro prism.

The Lowland is marked by a sense of memory and nostalgia. Jhumpa Lahiri uses the narrative tool of memory and nostalgia to carry forward the narrative. The characters are always reminiscing their past and are connected to the suburb of Tollygunge even if they are physically present thousands of miles away. The geographical space of Tollygunge is dotted with marshes and is lowland. The metaphorical use of the lowland in the narrative is significant. Since the characters are connected to the lowland, it seems as if the lowland is a space where every relationship is unearthed and secrets are revealed. It is a space which is without any affectation or pretension. It is a space that unites the cultural alienations. The lowland forces the characters to come to their senses and realise the true meaning of their circumstances. Udayan’s final moments hiding in the lowland is a case in point. He realises that he has not always been true to his goal. He had killed an unarmed police officer when the latter was at the school to receive his son. The lowland also attracts Gauri to Calcutta and she revisits the area to witness the

place where her husband was killed. Although the lowland was now no longer there and was dotted with high-rises, it still held a special place in the heart of Gauri. She once again understands the dynamics of her relationship with Udayan, her first love. The physical change in the area of Tollygunge also implies the change that has happened over the years within the space of interpersonal relationships among the characters.

The end of the novel is marked by reconciliations and disclosures that shower new light on the characters. Like other stories of Lahiri, *The Lowland* also throws some surprises for the readers. Gauri tells Subhash that she is moving out. Her decision to live life in her own terms is significant because that initiates a process of self-discovery for Gauri. Lahiri also reveals many a secret at the end of the novel that may not be always pleasant. Udayan's change of heart during his days as a Naxal cadre is revealed at the end of the novel. Udayan's decision to join the Naxalites was fuelled by the fact that he wanted to ensure social justice for the people who had remained marginalised over the years. We find Udayan gradually losing his revolutionary ideals and instead, he indulges in crimes, unbecoming of his character. With the help of the flashback technique of narration, Lahiri describes the last moments of Udayan's life. When Udayan is surrounded by the police in the lowlands of Tollygunge, he struggles to hide underwater and keep his breath for long. Udayan realises that the revolution has only instigated the feelings of hatred and violence in the society. His goals and dreams of an egalitarian society remained unfulfilled. Udayan is also reminded of Gauri. He feels that he has not done justice to his wife. The fact that Gauri will now have to live a life of a widow haunts Udayan. He dies a grisly death in the hands of the police and even his body is not

returned to his family. The tumultuous path chosen by Udayan has actually done more harm than good to the family. When Udayan is killed, Gauri is left all alone. Udayan's family refuses to acknowledge her presence. However, Subhash's offer to marry her and bring her to the US somehow saves her from certain social alienation. The marriage of Gauri and Subhash is more of convenience and has nothing to do with love. Perhaps, because of that, Gauri never fulfills her responsibilities as a mother towards her daughter Bela. She decides to devote her life to research and academics which is not at all liked by her husband Subhash. Subhash's love is never reciprocated by Gauri. Anu Prabhakar compares Gauri's passionate love for Udayan with Catherine's love for Heathcliff. Prabhakar feels that Gauri is, "one of the most bewildering characters to be written in a long time" (Prabhakar). Perhaps, that is the reason why Gauri could never reciprocate warmly the love shown to her by Subhash after Udayan's death. It seems as if Udayan's death had left an indelible mark on her psyche. Other relationships also undergo change during the course of the narrative. The relationship between Udayan and Subhash witnesses an upheaval because of the former's inclination towards the Naxal movement. Again, the lowland of Tollygunge seemed to be a metaphor of the relationship between the siblings. The ebb and flow witnessed in the marshes can be seen in the family relationships as well. The violent ecosystem of the marshy lowland where one form of life survived at the cost of the other represented the tumultuous dynamics that was present between the siblings as well.

The turbulence of relationships is ubiquitous throughout the plot. We find a strained relationship between Gauri, and her daughter Bela and grand-daughter Meghna.

Bela refuses to talk to Gauri when the latter visits them. Bela rebukes Gauri for abandoning the family when the former was a kid. Gauri feels a strong sense of remorse and decides to return to Kolkata and visit the place where Udayan was killed. Once again, the lowland of Tollygunge comes to the fore. The lowland was now no longer the place it used to be. It has now been turned into a concrete jungle and full of condominiums. There was no sign of the marshy land where Udayan was shot by the police. It appeared as if time had moved on but Gauri could not. Gauri decides to commit suicide but cannot muster the courage to do it. She returns to California instead. Esha Shah observes, “Lahiri invites the readers to interpret Gauri's guilt mixed with anger against Udayan as an explanation for her resentment of motherhood and the eventual abandonment of Bela” (Shah). Shah further comments that the cathartic revelations in the novel “make Gauri resemble a classical ascetic individual of the 19th and 20th centuries, the golden age of conscience and responsibility” (Shah). Thus, it can be seen that the Naxal’s revolution’s negative impact could still be felt within the family space of the Mitras’ long after Udayan was killed.

Coming to the authorial stance regarding the Naxal revolution, it has already been mentioned how Udayan felt in his final moments just before he was shot in the lowland. He realised that the revolution has done no good to the family. He also realises how Gauri’s life was shattered because of his decision to join the Naxals. There are certain instances as well where Jhumpa Lahiri cites how the Naxal cadres lacked moral integrity and true courage. To cite an example, Udayan chooses to kill a policeman when the latter was on his way to pick up his son from the school. Udayan chose the

very day because he and his comrades knew that the policeman would be off duty on that duty and unarmed. Udayan's gory act of dipping his hand in the blood of his enemy whom he had just killed and then, writing the party's initials on the wall "as the blood leaked down his wrists, into the crook of his arm, before he ran from the scene" (Lahiri 412) is nothing but beastly. Furthermore, Udayan decides to kill the police officer because the Naxal Party leaders had asked him to do so. Thus, it can be inferred that Udayan lacked the courage to take a decision on his own. The cadres were nothing but puppets in the hands of the masters. In this context, Udayan, bears a striking resemblance to Willie Chandran in V.S. Naipaul's *Magic Seeds*. Like Willie Chandran, Udayan is influenced by other people who seem to have a control over his decision making ability. The final moments of Udayan is marked by a sense of repentance. He knew he has failed Gauri. "He knew that he was no hero to her. He had lied to her and used her" (Lahiri 413). Udayan also realised that the revolution for which he was fighting was actually bearing no fruit. "But in this case it had fixed nothing, helped no one. In this case there was to be no revolution. He knew this now" (Lahiri 408).

Lahiri very poignantly sums up in the end. When Udayan is about to die, he remembers,

He'd known from the beginning the risk of what he was doing. But only the policemen's blood had prepared him. That blood had not belonged only to the police officer, it had become a part of Udayan also. So that he'd felt his own life begin to ebb, irrevocably, as the policeman lay

dying in the alley. Since then he'd waited for his own blood to spill.

(Lahiri 414)

These disclosures suggest that the plot of *The Lowland* is layered and cannot be painted in distinct shades of binaries. A question comes up in the minds of the readers regarding the moral integrity of the Naxals. In the words of Lisa Moore, “Lahiri gives us a provoking and affecting meditation on family and loss, the idealism of youth and how it can be volatile, manipulated and ultimately crushed” (Moore). Thus, the novel is a compelling tale that shows us how a misguided revolution can affect the dynamics of family relationships for years even after the revolution has ended. Many years later, when a budding researcher named Dipankar went to interview Gauri, their conversation centred on how the Naxals indulged in self-defeating strategies throughout the revolution. Gauri observed that the Naxal revolution failed because it could not address the concerns of the common man. The movement was marked by a lack of coordination. Thus, it can be safely summed up that Jhumpa Lahiri draws our attention to the utopian goals of the Naxal revolution and the faulty strategies adopted by the Naxals that were primarily responsible for the movement to fail.

Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Lowland* is an authentic portrayal of the Bengali society of the 1960s and 1970s. Through her depiction of the Naxal revolution, Lahiri seems to dabble in her favourite domain – human relationships and the constant evolution that relationships witness over a period of time. For her, the depicted Naxal movement is a narrative tool to delineate the emotional contours of the characters. If we

compare V.S. Naipaul's *Magic Seeds*, we find that Naipaul's primary objective has been to showcase the identity and existentialist crises of the protagonist Willie Chandran. Furthermore, Naipaul successfully shows how the revolution failed in India because of corrupt leaders and their incompetence. For Lahiri, the focus has been on the dynamics of family relationships. Although, we do see that Gauri suffers from an existentialist crisis and cultural alienation, and so, she decides to devote her time to graduate studies in the US, Lahiri stresses on the emotional turmoil that Gauri suffers because of the death of Udayan. Furthermore, because of her decisions, the lives of Subhash and Bela are also altered. The novel very truly portrays the social conditions of the age. We come to know how difficult it is for a widow to live life on her own terms. So, a character like Gauri has to leave for the US when she realises that it won't be possible for her to live at her in-law's place after the death of Udayan. Other forms of cultural alienation can also be cited in the text. When Gauri comes to the US with Subhash for the first time and the latter takes her to a party, Subhash is a little hesitant about the fact that everyone around might ask him about Gauri.

No one questioned that Gauri was his wife, or that he was soon to be the father of her child. The group wished them well, and they were sent off with an assortment of objects. (Lahiri 139)

Thus, it can be said that Lahiri successfully draws the contours of various cultural constructs in *The Lowland*. Had they been in India, their relationship would have been questioned since Subhash was not the biological father of Gauri's unborn

child.

Even Gauri's daughter Bela experiences this kind of cultural alienation.

She swims against the materialist current in America and feels impressed by an 18th century cult preaching celibacy and simple life, though she amends the celibacy injunction herself later on. (Lahiri 221).

Perhaps, this is because Bela is the daughter of Indian parents although she is born and brought up in America. Thus, she has imbibed mixed cultural values.

The Lowland is essentially a novel of cultural alienation. The anti-heroine Gauri is perhaps the best example of an alienated individual. In the quoted lines, we can see how Gauri is an alienated individual even in her own family space.

She'd convinced herself that Subhash was her rival, and that she was in competition with him for Bela, a competition that felt insulting, unjust. But of course it had not been a competition; it had been her own squandering. Her own withdrawal, covert, ineluctable. With her own hand she'd painted herself into a corner, and then out of the picture altogether. (Lahiri 180)

In Gramsci's words,

There co-exist many systems and currents of philosophical thought,

how these currents are born, how they are diffused, and why in the process of diffusion they fracture along certain lines and in certain directions. (Gramsci 632)

The same thing can be witnessed while analyzing the character of Gauri. The different cultural strains mix within Gauri's psyche and ultimately, make her a fractured soul. She is culturally alienated within her family as well as within the larger American social space owing to her Indian roots.

The fact that the Naxal revolution had affected hundreds of educated middle-class Bengali families does not escape the notice of Jhumpa Lahiri. Youths were killed and families were ruined in the process. According to Lahiri, the youths could never gauge the real negative intensity of the movement. The Naxals, in order to overthrow the hegemonic influences of the state, actually adopted an alternate hegemony of their own. Their own dictatorial way of establishing order in society was nothing but a different kind of hegemony. The Naxal revolutionaries' ideal of an egalitarian society that is free from social injustice is nothing but an illusion. They themselves are victims of the cultural hegemony that was prevalent in the state when the revolution started. The Naxals too wanted to eliminate their class enemies and establish the order of the majoritarians. They tried to convince the masses that their actions were actually for the betterment of the poor. Characters like Udayan were quite convinced of their conviction and the so called benevolence of the Naxal organisation. But in the end, their actions actually hastened the destruction of the family space. Thus, somewhere, the Naxals were

wrong in their assumption and estimation of the social space. In the novel, we find the Naxals wanting to establish an order based on violence, lack of ethos and corruption. Their utter disregard for human rights which is proved by the killing of the police officer by Udayan, is abhorrent, to say the least. *The Lowland* forces us to rethink whether the Naxal revolution could actually deliver its promise of an equitable society where everyone had access to human rights and resources.

Gramsci believed that hegemonic influence was primarily exercised by the superstructure as per the Marxian definition. The superstructure comprises of the legal institutions, forms of consciousness that expresses a certain class view, etc. In *The Lowland*, the novelist Jhumpa Lahiri casts doubt on the intentions of the state machinery. The way Udayan is killed by the police speaks volumes about state atrocities. Similarly, the organizational incompetence of the Naxals also finds mention in *The Lowland*. Therefore, just like *Magic Seeds*, *The Lowland* defines domination from an alternate perspective. Thus, Gramsci's hegemony not only comes from the state agencies but also from the people themselves. Udayan is a Naxal but he is not clear about his own affiliation. He just follows orders from above. His decision to kill the police officer is another instance why the revolutionaries cannot be fully trusted. Coming to the convulsion of self, we find Gauri failing to assimilate herself in a conjugal relationship with Subhash. She cannot identify her own existence and at one point of time, even contemplates committing suicide. Her decision to take refuge in the world of academics is an escape from the harsh realities and the turbulence that happens in her personal life.

After analysing *The Lowland*, we can infer that the protagonists Subhash and Gauri experience an intense feeling of turmoil and convulsion within their selves. They cannot come to terms with their present circumstances and to escape from that, they seek refuge elsewhere. Gauri immerses herself in academic pursuits while Subhash leads a lonely, frustrated life. None of them is happy and Gauri even tries to commit suicide at one point of time. Towards the end of the novel, there is a hint that Gauri may have started to come out of her past. In the following chapter titled “Transformation of Self”, the discussion focuses on how Gauri and the other characters undergo a process of realisation and change. Their lives are changed and they are transformed into a new self.

The Lives of Others: The novel *The Lives of Others* is set in Kolkata against the backdrop of the Naxalite revolt. Supratik Ghosh, the protagonist of the novel has joined the Naxalites because he is culturally alienated from his peers and family. Furthermore, he feels that only an armed rebellion can usher in an egalitarian society. Supratik comes from a typical Bengali middle-class family. While portraying the character of Supratik, Neel Mukherjee depicts the contemporary social class and the values that are inherent in it. In those days, the Bengali middle class was a product of the bourgeoisie. The members of the Bengali middle class had amassed wealth through trade and so, they saw the Naxalite revolution with a hint of suspicion. Needless to say, the values that Supratik’s family harbours are antithetical to what the protagonist nurtures within his self.

Akin to some other contemporary novels like Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Lowland* and Rohinton Mistry’s *A Fine Balance*, *The Lives of Others* examines the dynamics of family

relationships that are impacted by a turbulent political atmosphere. The three generations depicted by Mukherjee in *The Lives of Others* is a microcosmic reflection of the Bengali social space prevalent during the 1960s and the '70s. The novel is a critique of the deeply caste-ridden Bengali society that characterised hatred and contempt for the working class by the capitalist middle and upper classes who had wealth in their hands. The middle class was further characterised by an aversion towards any kind of change in the social order. The characters presented in the novel had their own eccentricities and rigid belief systems that can be said to be typical of the then times.

The protagonist Supratik realises that in order to change the society, an armed revolution is the only way out. He dreams of a society free from social injustice and so, joins the Naxals. His character portrayal helps in highlighting the other characters in his family who are exactly the opposite of his. Supratik acts as the foil character to the rest of the characters in the novel. However, Neel Mukherjee does not paint his protagonist in simple black and white. Through the protagonist's life, Mukherjee shows the style of functioning of the Naxals and how the movement, at times, was directionless. Furthermore, the novel also deals with how the Naxalite movement affected the family relationships of the then social space as depicted in the novel. Owing to the portrayal of evolving family dynamics in the novel, *The Lives of Others* is similar to Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* that deal with the Naxal movement of Bengal in the 20th century. During the course of the narrative of *The Lives of Others*, the readers witness how the farmers are deprived of a voice. The working class people are subjected to exploitations of every kind. But the novel also deals with the

contradictions and dilemmas that dominated the Bengali middle class. The pluralistic perceptions of the Naxal revolution characterise the novel and like any other Postmodern text, *The Lives of Others* offers a layered narrative of the political insurgency that had rocked Bengal some 50 years back.

The renowned social scientist Ranajit Guha had observed, “the history of agrarian disturbances in the subcontinent was endemic in nature and was as old as colonialism itself” (Beretta 66). Guha believes that the Naxalite revolution unified the landless farmers, unemployed youths and certain members of the Bengali middle class who were disillusioned with the faulty policies of the state that were apparently responsible for the pitiable social conditions prevailing during the times. The revolution comprised of people who came from different classes and sections of the society. Initially, the Naxalite revolution had started as an agrarian revolt but slowly, the revolution attained a political colour. The revolutionaries believed that the class enemy had to be annihilated and so, in the process, the revolutionaries took recourse to violence. They started killing the wealthy landlords of Bengal. The ideological flames reached the various cities, towns and villages of Bengal where the revolutionaries were soon joined by jobless youths who held the state responsible for the massive unemployment that was prevailing during the time. Thus, it can be said that at one point of time, the Naxalite revolution was dominated by different agendas that wanted to address the concerns of a cross-section of the society. The different agendas present in the movement somehow contributed to the dilemma and confusion of the cadres who ran the underground movement. The same dilemma and confusion can be seen in Supratik Ghosh, the protagonist of *The Lives of Others*. Supratik

fights against his own family that can be identified in the light of the bourgeoisie. His own family owned mills and land in Kolkata and so, belonged to the capitalist class who were the sworn enemies of the Naxalites. Supratik, though he was a member of the capitalist Ghosh family, could never identify himself to be a part of the farming class. He also could not accept the fact that his own family contributed towards the exploitation of the workers. His resentment against the state was also the product of the anguish born out of the problem of unemployment and identity crisis that resulted from the myopic state policies.

It has to be noted that Neel Mukherjee redefines the word 'subaltern' in his novel *The Lives of Others*. Mukherjee is successful in capturing the nerve of the Naxalite movement. He effectively gauges the increasing purview of the movement and how the Naxals struck a chord with almost every section of the contemporary society. Thus, the movement was not just restricted to the farming class, but it spread to sections of unemployed youths, mill workers, servants, etc. Supratik Ghosh, a member of the Ghosh family, does not belong to the marginalised section. Yet, he is motivated by the ideals of the Naxalites. He too, is relegated to the state of being a subaltern because of his non-affiliation with the belief systems championed by his immediate family relations. Supratik becomes an 'other' within his own family space. He also becomes an 'other' within the cadres of the Naxals because he is not a born farmer or a member of the proletariat. The word 'other' or 'subaltern' has been given a new meaning by the novelist in *The Lives of Others*.

As mentioned earlier, *The Lives of Others* is a critique of the contemporary government policies that were largely held to be responsible for the miserable condition of the state and its people. Owing to the economic downturn, the paper mill business of the Ghosh family is facing a decline and the family income is on the wane. The decreasing family income complicates matters and family relationships turn sour. There is a constant strife among the different members of the Ghosh family with regard to the family prestige and reputation that was at stake because of the volatile situation in the political space of the state during the time. Younger members of the Ghosh family understood that capitalists were mainly responsible for the economic exploitation and the resultant political turmoil in the state. The inherent hatred for the poor and the working class by the wealthy also fuelled the subjugation of the downtrodden. In fact, *The Lives of Others* can be considered to be a record of the caste and class divisions that divided the social fabric of Bengal. The different floors of the Ghosh mansion were a testimony to the caste divisions. The floors of the house were home to the different members of the household based on their social position and wealth. Thus, the Ghosh mansion was a microcosmic representation of the contemporary divided Bengali society.

The patriarch of the Ghosh family Prafullanath had the last say in the family dynamics. He was the one who determined the actions and activities of others. The rooms were allotted to every individual's social standing, and everyone was expected to remain within the limits prescribed by Prafullanath, the family patriarch. Just like the state government, Prafullanath derived joy in dictating and interfering into the lives of others. Owing to his interference, disharmony creeps within his family and there is growing

enmity among the other family members. Supratik's decision to leave the family mansion is also because of his father Adinath's divisive behaviour. The dynamics and equations within the Ghosh family were very similar to the conditions prevailing within the contemporary Bengali society which was riddled with problems of every kind and mistrust among the people.

The decadent society is also portrayed by the novelist on a micro-scale in the Ghosh family. One of the characters Somnath is a rapist and is wanted by the police. Characters such as Adinath and Suranjan are alcoholics and drug addicts. The Ghosh family is full of people who have criminal records. It is against these people that Supratik revolts and dreams of a society where everyone can live peacefully. Nandini Lal observes, "The older generation seeks refuge in alcohol, sadism, gold, coprophilia, incest, embezzlement, rape and prayer. The younger set finds God in Mao's 'Little Red Book' and even academics" (Lal 516). The moral decay that has crept inside the Ghosh family is representative of the larger decay that was present within the contemporary Bengal social space. Neel Mukherjee comments,

The opera of Bengali life, already pitched so high, had begun.... In this world of overheated reactions and hysteria, words spoken carried with them the unearthable charge of honour and insult; they remained crackling and alive for generation after generation. Another boundary was crossed, this time without the possibility of return. (Mukherjee 186)

Furthermore, the turbulent political atmosphere depicted in the novel is corroborated by incidents like the one where workers were run over by Prafullanath's car. *The Lives of Others* is a commentary on the crisis that had gripped the people of Bengal during the 1960s and its aftermath. There was a lack of cohesion and animosity between the landowners and the workers. The irony is that Supratik joined the Naxalites in order to escape the casteist and discriminatory policies of his family. But after joining, he realises that the problems plaguing the society are much deep rooted. Furthermore, for Supratik who was raised in a middleclass household, it became very difficult to adjust to the spartan lifestyle of the revolutionaries. When Supratik joins the students' union at Presidency College during his student days and subsequently, the Naxal party, he realises that life won't be easy for him in the coming days. He also understands that the social and economic divide between the poor and the middle class cannot be bridged easily because there is a deep mistrust between the various sections of the society.

The character of Supratik can be compared to Willie Chandran in V.S. Naipaul's *Magic Seeds*. After joining the revolutionaries, Chandran too realised that the goals of the revolution are often utopian. As a result, Willie soon experienced an existential crisis that eventually led to his desertion from the revolution. Thus, in the context of *The Lives of Others*, Supratik Ghosh too experiences pangs of alienation from his family as well as the revolution that he has joined. Supratik becomes the 'other', an alienated individual. Apart from Supratik, the 'others' referred to in the novel include the marginalised workers and farmers who faced injustice and exploitation in the hands of the landowners. Supratik's alienation and convulsion of self can be gauged from these lines: "But something is

clouding the excitement this year and she already knows its name: Supratik. Over the last year he has lost so much weight that the shadow he casts, in all light, is nothing more than a thin line” (Mukherjee 29).

The novelist makes sure that other characters including minor ones are culturally alienated as well.

Sabita Kumari, twenty-eight, a graduate from a tiny college in Daltongunj, has never dreamed of this role. Her parents expected her to become a school teacher. But that seems to her a half-remembered page from a book of someone else’s story. (Mukherjee 501)

Like *The Lowland*, *The Lives of Others* is also a novel about human relationships. However, Neel Mukherjee makes it very clear when he comments, “Not all family bonds are equal” (105) at the beginning of the fourth chapter. Thus, the readers get a hint that there will be certain family members who will be deprived and alienated. There is a distinct rift between Supratik and his father. This is evident from the following lines:

The assumption that his father would always have some sort of a privileged access to that outside world, much more so than his son, by virtue of his age, grated Supratik’s nerves raw. He wanted to quiz him, firing one question after another to this ridiculous man about the world outside. How much did he know about, say, the lives of those students who were being rounded up by the police in raids on neighbourhoods,

men's hostels of universities, taken into cells and tortured until they gave up names and whereabouts of their Naxalite comrades? (Mukherjee 423)

The above lines prove how Supratik is culturally alienated within his own family because of his affiliation with the Naxals. The difference in the thought processes between Supratik and his father can be better understood in the light of Gramsci's observation:

The fact of this process goes to show how necessary it is to order in a systematic, coherent and critical fashion one's own intuitions of life and the world, and to determine exactly what is to be understood by the word "systematic", so that it is not taken in the pedantic and academic sense. But this elaboration must be, and can only be, performed in the context of the history of philosophy, for it is this history which shows how thought has been elaborated over the centuries and what a collective effort has gone into the creation of our present method of thought which has subsumed and absorbed all this past history, including all its follies and mistakes. Nor should these mistakes themselves be neglected, for, although made in the past and since corrected, one cannot be sure that they will not be reproduced in the present and once again require correcting. (Gramsci 633)

Thus, according to Gramsci, the present method of thought is a constructed entity

that is present after absorbing the past history. This perhaps explains how members within the same family space can be so different. In *The Lives of Others*, the Ghosh family thus has individuals who are very different from one another. Although Supratk's father is a capitalist mill owner, Supratik harbours a socialist outlook and therefore, suffers from cultural alienation because he is never supported by his own family members.

Comparing the characters of Brati from Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084* and Supratik from *The Lives of Others*, Carlotta Beretta believes that the former could easily familiarise and identify himself with the ideals of the Naxal revolution unlike Supratik although "both the characters belonged to middle-class Bengali families living in more or less the same time frame" (Beretta 67). In *Mother of 1084*, the alienated individual is Sujata, Brati's mother. Thus, in Mahasweta Devi's novel, we find Sujata gradually isolating herself from her immediate family members after her son's death in police custody. Sujata also undergoes a process of realisation after Brati's death. She finds out her husband's philandering ways and the latter's contempt for Brati and his revolutionary ideologies. The ideological drift and differences within the family eventually take a toll and Sujata finds herself in close affinity with the goals of her dead son. A similar course of event takes place in *The Lives of Others* when Supratik finds himself ideologically all alone. None of his family members empathise with his thoughts and dreams. Nevertheless, there are differences between Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084* and Neel Mukherjee's *The Lives of Others*. Mahasweta Devi believed that the Naxalite revolution failed because of the non-cooperation of the Bengali intellectuals who could never align

themselves completely with the movement. It has to be noted that Mahasweta Devi believed that the Naxals were concerned about the wellbeing of the poor and the landless farmers. Mahasweta Devi perceived the state policies to be repressive and brutal and these state policies were responsible for the custodial deaths of many a promising youngster. Neel Mukherjee, on the other hand, is more interested to investigate the ambiguities present within the Naxal Party. Mukherjee's analysis is more comprehensive because he looks at the several socio-economic and political factors that were at play during the contemporary time portrayed in the novel.

There are similarities between the two novels as well. In both Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084* and Neel Mukherjee's *The Lives of Others*, we find inter-generational differences. The characters of Dibyanath and Adinath, the fathers of Brati and Supratik in *Mother of 1084* and *The Lives of Others* respectively are similar in their thought processes and resent the fact that their sons had joined the Naxals. Both fathers are eager to maintain their middle class gentleman image, at times, even at the cost of honesty, integrity and moral courage. Dibyanath, in *Mother of 1084*, does not like the fact that he is being identified as the father of Brati, a known Naxal revolutionary. When Brati is killed in police custody, Dibyanath distances himself from his son lest his name is associated with the Naxal revolution. Adinath too rebukes Supratik for being insensitive. Adinath chastises him for joining the Naxals.

Unlike Mahasweta Devi, Neel Mukherjee appears to be casting doubt on the integrity of the revolutionaries who had joined the Naxalite movement in the 20th century.

Towards the end of the novel, we find Supratik stealing some jewels from the Ghosh household. The blame falls on Madan, the servant employed in the Ghoshs' household. The act of Supratik is irresponsible. Furthermore, through the incident, the novelist appears to be highlighting the deep sense of mistrust that had developed in the contemporary society. Furthermore, it was perhaps easier to pin the blame of theft on a servant. Mukherjee comments,

Did he ... did he go down that route because of reasons of class, because a servant stealing is so much more credible, so much more natural, than a member of the family? Was it to make the theft believable to the police that he had framed Madan-da, or was it because it had cost less to betray a servant than one's own kind? (Mukherjee 451)

Mukherjee highlights other instances in *The Lives of Others* where the Naxalites seem to have lost their integrity. After Supratik's death, some Naxals plan to derail a passenger train. These Naxals follow a technique that was specialised by a certain 'Pratik' from the 1970s, a renowned Naxalite martyr. The incident mentioned in the novel is a direct reference to the Jnaneswari Express accident that happened in Bengal in May, 2010. Maoist cadres had allegedly removed the fishplates of the railway tracks that eventually led to the loss of around 150 innocent lives. Neel Mukherjee suggests that it was the only legacy that Supratik had left for the future members of the organisation, "his gift to his future comrades survived and for those who cared to or were old enough to

remember, he lived on in his bequest” (Mukherjee 504). The plan to derail a passenger train is also a metaphor to indicate that the movement has lost its track and direction. It has derailed from its objectives. Neel Mukherjee wants to draw the reader’s attention to the corruption that had slowly crept inside the Naxal movement. The transition of the movement from being something idealistic to a gang of thugs who plan to derail a passenger train full of unsuspecting, innocent passengers is something significant. The reference to the incident also suggests the reasons that led to the fall of the Naxal revolution. Moreover, the transition of Supratik from a bright, young student to someone who kills people is not to be missed. Michael Wessels comments,

Supratik’s enjoyment in this killing is an index of the moral harm produced by his political choices. He crosses the threshold into extreme violence, revelling in cruelty for its own sake. (Wessels 11)

The Lives of Others is a commentary on the divisions in the social and the family spaces as well. Sam Sacks believes, “This is a novel without heroes, and Supratik’s rebellion seems as mercenary and cold-hearted as his family’s upper-class complacency” (Sacks). The novel showcases how the characters evolve during the course of the narrative. A case in point is the young Supatik who joins the Naxals during his student days. Full of idealism, he dreams of an egalitarian society where oppression will be obliterated. However, at the end of the novel where the novelist mentions that Pratik, who is most likely the protagonist Supratik, had inspired the Naxal cadres to derail a passenger train implies that even he had somewhere lost his ideal self. Furthermore, the inability of the

revolutionaries to connect with the masses is also emphasised by the novelist. The ‘others’ in the novel are rarely given a voice to speak. So, *The Lives of Others* is a critique of the revolution that had left an indelible mark on the socio-political map of Bengal in the 20th century. Moreover, Neel Mukherjee explores the psychological and emotional contours of Supratik who becomes an ‘other’ within his own family because of his beliefs and allegiance. The contradictions and conflicts present within family and social spaces are effectively portrayed by the novelist.

To sum up, *The Lives of Others* chronicles the contemporary time and space of Calcutta. The novel is also representative of the Bengali middle class that apparently stayed away from the ideological beliefs of a socialist movement like that of the Naxalites. The class divisions, casteist politics and family equations that have witnessed political turmoil find mention in the novel. Ultimately, the novel is a telling commentary on the deep rooted malaise that existed in the contemporary society of the 1960s. The backdrop of the political resistance movement serves to highlight the problematic equations existing among the classes and interpersonal relations of the characters.

Gramsci’s hegemony can be found in the Ghosh family depicted in *The Lives of Others*. The Ghosh family harbours a capitalist mindset. They own a mill and are often portrayed by the novelist as perpetrators of exploitation and suppression. Supratik, rebels against his own family and joins the revolutionaries. As per Gramsci’s definition of hegemony, the civil society is most rampant in introducing the concept of hegemony. Here, hegemony is not imposed upon by force but by the tacit consent of the people of a

certain community. The hegemonic influence of the Ghosh family upon the millworkers is a microcosmic picture of the entire social space where a similar kind of repression occurs. Thus, Gramsci's hegemony can be found operating on different levels in the Ghosh family. It can be found within the family as well as the family's interaction with the mill workers and servants who come from a lower socio-economic background. Ironically, Supratik who joins the Naxalites to counter this hegemonic influence himself becomes a part of the dominant group, in Gramsci's words. Supratik's interaction with the servant Madan is an example in this context. Thus, like the other chosen novels, *The Lives of Others*, defines and elaborates Gramsci's depiction of hegemony. In fact, the novel shows certain alternate forms of hegemonic influences as well that comes from the very people who vouch for a classless society. Supratik, the protagonist undergoes turbulence within himself and alienation since he rebels against his own family.

The outcome of this chapter points towards the layered nature of alienation that the characters face. Cultural alienation can operate on many levels and is actually a product of several divergent socio-cultural and economic factors. The Naxal movement and similar other movements aggravate the process of the convulsion and alienation of the characters. This convulsion and alienation eventually lead to a transformation in their beliefs and value systems. Cultural alienation entails a metamorphosis of self. The following chapter titled 'Transformation of Self' discusses how the protagonists of the chosen novels are transformed during the course of the plot.

Chapter: Five

Transformation of Self

The term ‘subaltern’ was first used by Antonio Gramsci in his *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Gramsci used the term to denote the classes that were socially inferior and had no ideological power. To escape the censorship of Benito Mussolini, Gramsci used the term ‘subaltern’ in place of words like proletariat. The six chosen novels talk about marginality and marginalised characters. The characters are subjected to different positions within the social space and furthermore, they are subjected to oppression by various agencies of power. As a result, the protagonists of the novels change their selves, and their responses change according to the shift in their circumstances. This chapter titled ‘Transformation of Self’ focuses on the aspect of change that the characters undergo and analyses the situations that affect the characters through a detailed textual analysis of the chosen novels.

Mahasweta Devi has always been recognised as the writer who writes about the subaltern and the marginalised people. The word ‘subaltern’ can represent people who are treated as subordinates in terms of class, caste, religion and gender. Mahasweta Devi deviated from the traditional Bengali literature where the bourgeoisie was portrayed and instead, chose to write on the peasants, tribal people and the proletariat of India. Devi Vijay comments on Mahasweta Devi, “Mahasweta's writing contests the erasures of subaltern identities and cultures in societal discourse” (Vijay 485). Thus, the readers find the analysis of a character like Sujata in *Mother of 1084* who would have otherwise been

forgotten. Sujata is a subaltern character who ultimately overcomes her marginal identity and moves on to gain her own space amidst an exploitative and patriarchal society.

In *Mother of 1084*, the subjects of exploitation and marginalisation are dealt with by the novelist against the backdrop of the Naxalite movement that rocked Bengal in the 1960s. The novel deals with the experiences and life of Sujata Chatterjee who comes from an upper middle class family. Through the eyes of Sujata, Mahasweta Devi shows the patriarchy and the moral prudery that were present in contemporary Bengal. Furthermore, the novel also defines trajectory in which the character of Brati evolved and subsequently, how Brati and his life influenced Sujata and transformed her life as well.

In *Mother of 1084*, Mahasweta Devi uses the Naxalbari revolution as the backdrop to the story. In the spring of 1967, in a small village called Naxalbari in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal, the peasants had rose to rebel against the feudal landlords and the establishment. The Naxalites were considered by historians as terrorists and anti-social elements. However, Mahasweta Devi focuses on the young students and intellectuals who dreamt of an egalitarian society and driven by idealism had fought against the exploitation committed by the state and the feudal landlords. Mahasweta Devi empathizes with the tribals and the subaltern sections of the society who were victims of centuries old oppression.

In *Mother of 1084*, Brati Chatterjee was betrayed by one his fellow comrades and ultimately, Brati is killed by the police. The plot moves ahead with Brati being identified only as corpse no. 1084. This is a chilling reminder that for the state, these youths are

nothing but a number. Their existence is denied by the state machinery. The state apathy is amply proved by these actions. The plot narrated in a flashback manner shows how Brati's father bribes the police lest he is known as the father of a Naxalite rebel. He is not at all keen to associate with the revolutionaries. This shows how the middle class Bengali society or the bourgeoisie avoided the revolution. On the other hand, Brati's mother who herself, was subjected to various kinds of marginalisation because of patriarchy, could identify herself with the ideals of her dead son. The novella is a reconstruction of Brati's life and the gradual transformation of Sujata's life.

The entire story takes place on the second anniversary of Brati's death that also happens to be her daughter's engagement to the socialite Tony Kapadia. This reference to her daughter's engagement shows how Brati's memory has been relegated to non-existence. It is only Sujata who feels the pain of losing her son. She spends the day visiting and revisiting her son's life. For her, Brati's life acts as the catalyst in the process of realisation that Sujata has post Brati's death. Sujata realises how her upper middle class sheltered life is full of superficialities and hypocrisy. The novella is a commentary on the social space. She delves deep into the life of Brati and tries to figure out what others felt about Brati, how Brati had thought about the society and the kind of thoughts that might have crossed into Brati's mind moments before his death. On the other hand, Sujata also understands what will now happen to her and her own precarious existence within her family space. She is isolated and alienated from her own folks because of her beliefs and value systems.

The transformation that Sujata experiences transcends the mortal boundaries and assumes a universal significance. Sujata represents all mothers who have lost their sons for the cause of a just society. “Who is Sujata? Only a mother. Who are those hundreds of thousands whose hearts, even now, are being gnawed by questions? Only mothers” (Devi 51). Somu’s mother is one such example. Although Somu’s mother came from a poor family background, yet, their common ground of sorrow ultimately unites the two mothers.

She realised that Somu’s mother, with her little learning, her limited intelligence and her inability to put her ideas into words, thought the same thoughts as she with all her learning, clarity of vision and competence in articulating ideas. (Devi 53)

Sujata’s character slowly unfolds throughout the novel and she experiences a gradual change in her outlook. She slowly musters the courage to understand that her own social space is actually exploitative in nature and so, she must move on in order to live and keep alive Brati’s memories. Thus, a slow change can be witnessed in her character that forms the pivot around which the plot revolves. It also appears as if Mahasweta Devi aptly recorded the contemporary history and positioned her characters to critique the falsity and hypocrisy that characterised the society during that time.

Brati’s ideological affiliation towards the Naxalite movement turns him into a rebel and subsequently, an outlaw in the eyes of the society. When Brati is killed in police custody, Sujata is deeply affected. She tries to understand the thought process of

Brati after his death and in the process, understands her own precarious position within the family as well as within the social space. The alienation, loneliness, deprivation that Sujata faces gradually turns her into someone who is resilient and has the clarity to decide the course of her life.

The novella is a critique of human relationships and how hypocrisy is inherent within the family and social spaces. Sujata's marriage was considered to be a happy one since her husband Dibyanath was a wealthy chartered accountant. Dibyanath never treated Sujata on equal terms and during the thirty-four years of their married life, Dibyanath had been a philanderer, often with the tacit approval of his kids. The social space inhabited by Sujata can be explained in the light of Gramscian hegemony. It is said that the dynamics of common sense involves a relationship between coercion and consent that form a key section of hegemony. Coercion also implies control and enforcement. On the other hand, consent is built through the workings of the civil society. The state applies both the tools on its citizens. Control is exercised over the citizens with the help of certain agencies while citizens are also encouraged to provide their consent without being coerced. In the case of Sujata and Brati, the latter becomes the victim of coercion. Since Brati refuses to toe the line of the state, he is killed by the police. On the other hand, Sujata is the victim of common sense. Initially, she tacitly accepts her lot and feels that she has to comply with the normative behaviour dictated by her husband Dibyanath Chatterjee.

Sujata's efforts to understand her son's revolutionary ideals uncover her own

alienation from the fake world that she inhabits. Dibyanath never wanted to be associated with the Naxals and always wanted to have a clean image in the eyes of the law. He was particularly concerned about his reputation and so, when Brati dies, Dibyanath refuses to visit the police morgue to identify his son's body. On the other hand, Sujata was crestfallen when she learns the news of her son's death. When she decides to visit the police morgue, Dibyanath refuses to provide his car to Sujata. He says,

It would not be the right thing to keep his car waiting before Kantapukur. Anybody could identify the car. That day, with Brati's death Brati's father had also died for Sujata. The way he had behaved that day, that moment, had shattered numberless illusions for her (Devi 7).

After the death of Brati, Sujata visits his former comrades to know more about her son. This journey gradually proves to be an eye-opener for her because she starts to understand the ideals that Brati had tried to uphold. She met Somu's family and later, Nandini who was Brati's love.

Mother of 1084 is an authentic portrayal of the contemporary hard times that were hit by the Naxal revolution. Uma Parameswaran comments, "Recording contemporary history was Devi's self-imposed mandate" (Parameswaran 457). Therefore, the novelist draws her characters against the backdrop of a turbulent period and tries to highlight the pain and awakening of a mother how is deeply anguished after her son's death.

The novel divided into three parts: Morning, Afternoon and Evening symbolically

refers to the different phases in the protagonist Sujata's life. The story told in flashback form of narration shows how Sujata was delighted when Brati was born. Later, when he is killed, Sujata is referred to as Mother of 1084. He becomes just a corpse number who is devoid of a name. Dibyanath accuses Sujata of wrongly upbringing Brati. He tells her, "Mother's child! It's you who taught him to be my enemy" (Devi 15).

The second chapter mainly focuses on Sujata's visits to the house of Brati's former comrade Somu who was killed as well. Somu's family was poor unlike Sujata's and so, the death of Somu has actually landed his family in dire straits. Sujata's meeting with Nandini, Brati's beloved helps her to know the events leading to Brati's death. The moments before Brati's death helped her realise how Brati had transformed into someone who was concerned about society and wanted to see a social space that was egalitarian in nature. This made Sujata realise how she herself was the victim of patriarchy and unfair power politics within the family space. Sujata feels connected to Brati once more and a gradual phase of transformation can be witnessed in Sujata.

The last chapter titled 'Evening' in *Mother of 1084* shows the readers a more matured and evolved Sujata. She has emerged as a stronger woman and become more politically sensitive. She decides to leave the house since she knows that Brati will never be respected by the present inmates of the house. She also decides to sever all ties with her family members because they could never align themselves with the goals of Brati. Sujata feels happy that she has left all the hypocrisy behind her. The first glimpse of Sujata is very different from the Sujata who decides to leave her family behind. Initially,

Sujata was hesitant and dependent on her family for her emotional and financial needs. Towards the end of the novella, Sujata becomes much more confident about herself and existence. Thus, Brati's life acts as a catalyst for Sujata.

Sujata's role as a child-bearing machine and later as an earning member gradually turns into something more meaningful. She understands the value of her personal dignity and decides to fight for it. She now knows how the people in her own family wore masks to hide their own pretensions and falsity. Thus, Sujata uplifts herself from a state where she was relegated as an object and nothing else. The novel ends with hope because Sujata emerges as a stronger woman who can now take decisions on her own.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* reveals various forms of exploitation. In the previous chapter titled 'Cultural Alienation', the researcher demonstrated how the protagonists of the six chosen works were culturally alienated because of various socio-economic and political reasons. The characters are mostly victims of state policies and the hegemonic influences of the majoritarian sections of the society. Marginalisation and suppression are shown in various ways in the novel: The women of the Ayemenem House are abused regularly. They are the victims of the patriarchy. The children in the novel are also abused and they are unable to find a place for themselves. The Dalits and the downtrodden are disrespected and they are exploited by the upper caste people and the government agencies. Furthermore, the novelist is concerned about the environment. She critiques the increasing greed of the people that has affected the environment for so long.

The God of Small Things reflects the contemporary social space of Kerala. The women characters in the novel are Syrian Christians who are a minority. They are subjugated and repressed because of the prevalence of caste hegemony and patriarchy. Owing to their religious status, they are repressed as well. The prejudice against the Syrian Christians can be felt through these lines: “Chacko said that Estha and Rahel were indecently healthy. And so, was Sophie Mol. He said that it was because they didn’t suffer from “inbreeding like most Syrian Christians” (Roy 64). The inter-generational experiences of the characters also find mention in the novel.

The novel records the experiences of several women characters in the novel. Baby Kochamma is the daughter of Reverend E. John Ipe who is a priest. The characters in the novel themselves reflect the hypocrisy that runs deep within the social space of Kerala. Baby Kochamma has always been a religious person. However, it can be understood that her religious mindset is not always genuine. She is in love with an Irish monk named Father Mulligan and tries to seduce the priest when she asks the priest to explain certain passages from the Bible. Father Mulligan has to return to Madras and so, Baby Kochamma decides to convert to Roman Catholicism so that she can be near the priest. Later, she decides to leave Roman Catholicism because she understood that it won’t be easy for her to be near Father Mulligan. Thus, her actions are inspired by her love for the Father and not by any religious devotion.

After her affair with Father Mulligan, Baby Kochamma cannot marry any other person because no man practicing Roman Catholicism can marry someone who is from

the Syrian Christian community. This highlights the prejudice and biasedness of the social space depicted in the novel. When Father Mulligan converts to Vaishnava philosophy, Baby Kochamma continues sending him letters. Baby Kochamma gets offended because she knows that Father Mulligan has renounced his vows not because of her.

The character of Baby Kochamma also highlights the fact that for a woman, marriage is the ultimate goal in life. An unmarried woman is looked down upon in life. Education is not accorded priority in a woman's life. Furthermore, in both the cases of Ammu and Baby Kochamma, it can be seen how the society frowns upon a woman who ventures to seek a partner for herself. Baby Kochamma had to convert to Roman Catholicism in order to be eligible for marriage. Arundhati Roy uses her characters like Baby Kochamma to show that spirituality was perhaps the last thing in Baby Kochamma's mind when she converted to Roman Catholicism. Her character shows deception and falsity. She is a narcissist who loves to flaunt her wealth and pride. She attends Sophie Mol's funeral wearing an expensive saree. At the age of eighty three, she is concerned about how she looks. She asks Rahel whether her breasts are still attractive.

She is a religious bigot as well. She hates Hindus. She says, the Hindus "have no sense of privacy". Chacko responds by saying, "And I have heard that their babies hatch from eggs" (Roy 86).

Divorce is an issue that is dealt with by the novelist. A divorced daughter is considered a taboo in contemporary Kerala. Baby Kochamma feels that a married

daughter should not stay at her parents' place. Baby Kochamma is herself a supporter of patriarchy. She chastises Ammu because the latter had married a Hindu. Her divorce only antagonises Baby Kochamma. She feels jealous because in her own love life, she could not marry Father Mulligan. The other instances of patriarchy and hypocrisy can be found in the novel as well. Chacko continues with his sexual adventures, but Ammu is criticised for choosing her own partner. Chacko's actions are justified by citing 'man's needs', but Velutha is criticised for liking Ammu. Furthermore, Baby Kochamma gets Velutha arrested, and she is also responsible for Ammu's banishment. She is indirectly responsible for Ammu's death as well. Baby Kochamma hates Rahel and Estha because they are half-Hindus. Both the children are disliked by Baby Kochamma.

Baby Kochamma asks Estha to identify Velutha in front of the police. This leads to Velutha's arrest and subsequently, Velutha dies. Although Estha feels guilty about her role, Baby Kochamma feels very happy because he hates Velutha because of his low caste. Velutha's association with the Communist Party makes matters worse. Baby Kochamma detests Velutha's presence. As mentioned before, Velutha dislikes Ammu because she loves Velutha. She feels a sadist pleasure when Velutha is arrested. Although Baby Kochamma had herself loved Father Mulligan, she dislikes the fact that Ammu loves Velutha.

Another female character Mammachi is a victim of patriarchy. Her marriage is not a happy one because her husband Benaan John Ipe is not professionally successful. John Ipe is abusive and beats his wife regularly. John Ipe is a tyrant who never hesitates

to torture his wife. When her violin teacher appreciates her, John Ipe forbids Mammachi to go out of the house. He does not help Mammachi when the latter starts a pickle business. When her son Chacko takes over the business, he ignores Mammachi. Mammachi accepts her fate and does not protest. She resigns herself to the patriarchy that is prevalent in Ayemenem House. She is also not disturbed when Chacko is physically involved with other women. When Ammu falls in love with Velutha, Mammachi does not approve the relationship. She builds a separate entrance so that Chacko finds it easier to enter the house with his women friends. Mammachi also does not like Margaret, Chacko's wife. "She hated her for leaving him. But would have hated her even more had she stayed" (Roy 167). Mammachi does not like the other women characters to be happy. Therefore, it can be inferred that patriarchy may not always be perpetrated by men. Women can be agents of patriarchy too. She despises Velutha because the latter is from a lower caste. Like Baby Kochamma, she is partly responsible for Velutha's death.

The character of the protagonist Ammu is significant because she represents the women of the new generation. She is very different from Mammachi and Baby Kochamma. She has been a victim of patriarchy. Unlike her brother who was sent to the UK for higher studies, Ammu's father felt that it was unnecessary to send his daughter to a foreign country just because she was a girl. She was supposed to get married. Education was secondary for her. Ammu has always been a free-spirited woman. She wanted to marry the man of her choice. Thus, she marries a Bengali Hindu whom she meets while visiting her aunt in Calcutta. Before her marriage, she had never received marriage proposals because her father was unable to pay dowry. Ammu never wanted to return to

Ayemenem House because she felt suffocated within its premises. Perhaps, that had motivated her to marry the Bengali individual. However, her marriage was an unhappy one. Ammu's rebellious character is proved by the fact that she is involved in an inter-community marriage.

Ammu's husband is an alcoholic and abusive. He sends Ammu to his boss because the former wants some professional gains in his career. Ammu comes out of the marriage after beating her husband with the heaviest book in the bookshelf. Ammu is different from Mammachi because the latter had tolerated the violence perpetrated by her husband. When Ammu is forced to return to Ayemenem House with her kids, she is given a lukewarm welcome. She is neglected. Yet, Ammu is fiercely independent and exposes the hypocrisy of everyone including Chacko. Ammu is a rebel. She even refuses to adopt the surname of her husband. This explains the absence of Rahel and Estha's surnames in the novel. She feels that choosing between her husband's name and her father's name does not "give a woman much of a choice" (Roy 36). Ammu's life exposes how society is still dictated by the terms set by patriarchal hegemony. Being a rebel, Ammu is conscious of her physical beauty. She spends her time admiring her own beauty. She also goes for midnight swims and spends hours on the riverbank listening to a transistor. She also smokes cigarettes that sets her apart from the other ladies in the household.

When Velutha arrives, Ammu decides to "love by night the man her children loved by day" (Roy 44). This secret love affair continues for almost a fortnight before

Velutha's father reports it to Mammachi. Therefore, *The God of Small Things* brings to the fore the union of two rebels. The love between Velutha and Ammu is never an illicit relationship between a divorcee and a Dalit. Rather, their union exposes the hypocritical laws of the society. On the relationship between Velutha and Ammu, O.P. Dwivedi observes, "By her treatment of the subaltern, she raises a moot question about their pitiable position in Indian society but fails in her effort to give them their voice. Nevertheless, she urges them to shatter all conventions of the traditional society in order to fetch an identity for themselves" (Dwivedi 393). The relationship between Velutha and Ammu triggers a deep sense of hatred in Mammachi and Baby Kochamma. Velutha is implicated in a false case of attempted rape and kidnap and murder of Sophie Mol. Velutha is subsequently arrested and later dies in police custody. The hypocrisy is further exposed when the police inspector dismisses Ammu's pleas. He, instead, stares at Ammu's breasts and reveals his own moral depravity. On the other hand, Ammu's moral courage is also revealed because she dares to go to the police station and attempt to free Velutha. The hypocrisy of the other members of the Ayemenem House is further exposed when Chacko asks Ammu to leave. Subsequently, Ammu is separated from her children since Estha is returned to his father and Rahel is allowed to live at Ayemenem. However, Ammu cannot visit Rahel frequently. Ammu later dies an ignominious death at Bharat Lodge in Alleppey where she had gone to attend a job interview.

Thus, Ammu is a character who has all along been wronged by her relatives throughout her life. She had been betrayed by her husband, wronged by her brother and mother, insulted by the police and later, rendered almost a destitute by the society around

her. Thus, Ammu's character serves the purpose to highlight the social injustices that are at play. Priya Joseph comments, "The novel is a comment on the society of the clime not merely influenced by the imposition of colonialism in a not long ago past and a newly acquired independence, but by survivals of feudal and caste laws and the essential inequality of opportunities for development and progress" (Joseph 123). Therefore, the portrayal of the characters in the novel is authentic and the novel is a commentary on the social space during the contemporary times. Matthew Donoghue explains cultural hegemony as: "Hegemony is, thus, the promotion and dominance of a particular set of ideas through the construction of a socio-cultural unity developed through both material and ideational struggles" (Donoghue 396). Thus, Ammu could not fit within the particular set of ideas as defined by the members of the Ayemenem House. This made her marginalised within her own house.

Ammu's daughter Rahel is another character who undergoes transformation. She is neglected by her maternal uncle, grand aunt and grandmother. Although Ammu loves her daughter, Rahel does not get the opportunity to enjoy her mother's love and affection because Ammu dies young. This, it can be said that because of the conspiracy and wickedness of Baby Kochamma and Mammachi, Rahel is deprived of a normal childhood. She gradually becomes an independent woman who is capable of taking initiatives. She never prefers to stay in the Ayemenem House and so, gets herself admitted into a college of architecture in Delhi. She is not in love with the subject but she gets herself admitted only because she wants to stay away from her relatives. During her stay at the college, she meets Larry McCaslin and marries him. Rahel very well knows

that her circumstances are adverse and she hardly has any relatives who will pay a dowry to get her married to a man of her choice. So, she decides to get married “like a passenger drifts towards an occupied chair in an airport lounge with a Sitting Down sense” (Roy 18). Although Larry is never abusive towards Rahel, he is never understanding towards Rahel. He fails to bring that passion in the relationship and eventually, Rahel decides to leave him. For Rahel, marriage is never an unbreakable yoke. This also proves Rahel’s independent spirit. She is not hesitant when she breaks the news of her divorce to Comrade Pillai. When Comrade Pillai hears the news of her divorce, he exclaims,

“Die-vorced?” His voice rose to such a high register that it cracked on the question mark. He even pronounced the words as though it were a form of death. (Roy 130)

Rahel is never perturbed by her divorce. She is, instead a strong woman. In order to sustain herself, she works as a waitress in a New York restaurant. Furthermore, she works the night shift in a gas station. Owing to her work in the night shift, she has to regularly encounter goons and criminals. However, she maintains her calm and works there. Moreover, Rahel also takes responsibility for her brother Estha who has turned speechless because of the mishappenings in his life. Thus, it does not come as a surprise that Rahel leaves her job in the US and decides to return to India when she learns that Estha has returned too. Rahel, like her mother experiences patriarchy and suffers because of the grave injustices meted out to her. However, she is a stronger woman than her mother who dares to take on life, no matter what the circumstances are. Gramsci had

defined common sense as the ‘average’ worldview of the general population as opposed to the English understanding of the term as ‘uncomplicated’ sense. Matthew Donogue argues, “It is contingent on a multiplicity of ideas, images, facts and assumptions and ‘could become a ground of struggle because it is an amalgam of historically effective ideologies, scientific doctrines and social mythologies’” (Donoghue 400). Thus, things such as divorce, marriage, relationships, etc. are looked at from the Gramscian common sense point of view. This commonsense point of view is often moulded by ideologies, social mythologies, etc. Whoever goes against the commonsense point of view becomes isolated from the rest of the community. Thus, some of the characters are often found isolated from the rest of their family members because of their actions.

The above discussion projects the sufferings of the three protagonists, namely, Baby Kochamma, Mammachi and Ammu. The transformation of these characters is quite distinct. Baby Kochamma who has been a victim of patriarchy and social prejudices eventually gets familiar with the ideas and agencies of oppression. She does not mind the abuses of her husband. Mammachi, on the other hand, gradually loses her human virtues. Her mind gets perverted, and she slowly loses her balance of mind. She cannot stand the happiness of others. The intense feeling of jealousy that she has towards Ammu is unhealthy. Ammu, on the other hand, is perhaps the only character who undergoes a significant transformation of self. As already discussed in the present chapter, she is a brave woman. She represents the fearless women of her age. She aspires for equality and freedom. Through the course of the plot, Ammu can be seen in various avatars. First, she is married to an abusive Bengali husband. Then, she defies all social conventions and

falls in love with a lower caste man Velutha. Later, she displays indomitable courage when she goes to the police station to demand the release of Velutha. When Ammu is thrown out of Ayemenem House, she does not lose courage. She tries looking for jobs and eventually, dies in a non-descript hotel at the age of thirty one. In fact, she desperately wanted to have a job in order to support herself. Thus, the happenings in the plot transformed Ammu significantly. Ammu can be said to be the spokesperson of Arundhati Roy. She conveys the message of the novelist and serves as the pivot in the plot. It is because of her that we come across the character of Velutha. It is because of Ammu that the caste divisions of the society are exposed. Furthermore, the character of Ammu serves to highlight the characters of Baby Kochamma, Chacko, Mammachi and others. Thus, the character of Ammu can be said to be a foil character.

Velutha is another character in *The God of Small Things* who undergoes certain transformation of self. Unlike his elder brother Kuttapen who is paralysed waist down, Velutha is a person agile in soul and body. Velutha is also not like his father who is docile and had accepted his lot as a Dalit who is subjected to every kind of marginalisation. Velutha is someone who is a born rebel. He has a mind of his own and refuses to comply with the abusive social codes of conduct that are heavily prejudiced towards the marginalised Dalits. Kuttapen cannot read or write. Thus, he is not hated by everyone. Being close to the generation of his father, Kuttapen remains a conformist and never challenges the established normative behaviour of the upper caste people. Velutha, on the other hand, is a self-made man. He wants to be like a 'mombatti' who has the quality of burning by himself. He doesn't want to be like a 'laltain' that needs oil from

outside to burn. Thus, Velutha's father is always apprehensive about his son Velutha's behaviour.

Certain imageries have been used by Arundhati Roy in order to highlight the apparent dichotomies in Velutha's character. The word 'Velutha' means 'white' in Malayalam. However, Velutha's complexion is dark. Thus, there is an indication that the reality and the name may not be the same. Velutha is also not illiterate. He knows how to read and write. Furthermore, he can craft things, especially from wood. He could create intricate toys with dried palm reeds, tapioca stems and cashew nuts. Velutha also knows about carpentry and he is adept at handling machines. Mammachi once commented that had Velutha not been born as a Paravan, he would have certainly become an engineer.

However, as mentioned earlier, Velutha is a rebel and Vellya Paapen dreads this quality in him. Velutha too doesn't like the restrictions imposed on him by his father. He dislikes the expectations from him by the society and so, he decides to stay away from his house. He stays aloof from his family for four years and returns only after his mother's death. No one knows about his whereabouts during these four years. Thus, Velutha is an enigmatic character who definitely is different from the rest of his ilk. After his return, Velutha joins the Marxist Labour Union. He is often seen in processions led by the Marxists. In one such procession, Baby Kochamma is humiliated by the people in the procession and this enrages Kochamma. She finds an easy target in Velutha and later, accuses Velutha of murdering Sophie Mol.

These processions play an important role in bringing close Velutha and Ammu.

Although Ammu knew Velutha since childhood since the latter used to visit Ayemenem House and deliver coconuts that he had plucked. Ammu also falls in love with Velutha because the latter loves Ammu's children Rahel and Estha.

Both Ammu and Velutha admired each other. Their love was based on mutual respect as well as physical attraction.

She wondered at how his body had changed – so quietly, from a flat muscled boy's body into a man's body. Contoured and hard. A swimmer's body. A swimmer-carpenter's body. Polished with a high-wax body polish. He had high cheekbones and a white, sudden smile. His smile was the only piece of baggage he had carried with him from boyhood to manhood. (Roy 174-175)

Velutha too admired Ammu. He discovered that Ammu was physically attractive and beautiful.

He saw that Rahel's mother was a woman. That he had deep dimples when she smiled and that they stayed on long after her smile left her eyes. He saw that her brown arms were round and firm and perfect. That her shoulders shone, but her eyes were somewhere else. (Roy 176)

This mutual love affair is soon exposed by Velutha's father who complains to Mammachi about his son's deeds. Baby Kochamma takes this opportunity to settle scores with Velutha. She goes to the police station and files a complaint. Even Mammachi

abuses Velutha. When Velutha goes to Comrade Pillai to seek help, the latter refuses to help by saying that the party cannot help someone's personal matter. At the Kottayam Police Station, Comrade Pillai does not try to help Velutha. This amply proves the hypocrisy of the Marxists.

Velutha is severely tortured by the police. He is grievously injured that ultimately causes his death. The police who beat Velutha mercilessly were merely performing duties that consisted of defending social norms and the traditional caste rules that have been prevalent over the ages. It appeared as if the police were exercising fear. The state machinery wanted to instill fear lest anyone from the Paravan community decide to emulate Velutha.

Velutha is like a typical Shakespearean tragic hero. He wanted to carve a niche for himself within the caste-ridden society of Kerala. Velutha's character also serves a pivotal role in taking forward the narrative, just like the character of Ammu. Velutha's character shows how the other characters are prejudiced although they themselves are victims of marginalisation and patriarchy. Velutha's character is a round one and manages to evoke empathy from the readers. Velutha also manages to expose the fissures within the society that are deep-rooted. The transformation in Velutha can be defined in terms of his love for Ammu. Although initially, he is hesitant, finally, he gives up and makes love to Ammu. Velutha is an independent-minded character who values his freedom. He is brave and never hesitates to come forward. He is someone who believes in an egalitarian society. He is also ambitious and tries to improve his lot by learning how

to read and write and learning carpentry. He is resourceful and thus, he gains entry into the Ayemenem House.

Ammu and Velutha undergo transformation throughout the plot. It is because of these two dynamic characters that the social ills are exposed. Thus, their lives are intricate in the plot. Their presence and subsequent death reiterate the novelist's assertion that the marginalised ought to be heard.

The quest for meaning in life by a human being has always been one of the central motifs of Postcolonial literature. The quest for purpose and meaning of life has been adopted as a central idea by many Postmodern novelists. In novels like *The Lowland* and *The Lives of Others*, we find that the protagonists Udayan and Supratik join the Naxalite revolution in order to bring a change in society. In the process, they undergo a transformation in their lives. V.S. Naipaul, in his novel *Magic Seeds*, does the same and in his novel, we find the protagonist Willie Chandran joining a group of revolutionaries in Southern India to bring meaning into his own life. Thus, there is an indication that Willie Chandran will be experiencing certain life-changing moments during the course of the plot that will result in a transformation of the self.

Naipaul's other novels also bring about this trend. His characters are often uprooted from impoverished societies and transported to an altogether different space. Thus, we find the diasporic alienation in most of Naipaul's novels. His characters seek a direction in life in their apparent directionless existence and so, they try to figure out their own existence in the universe.

As mentioned earlier, *Magic Seeds*, a sequel to the earlier novel, *Half a Life*, talks about a youth Willie Somerset Chandran who initially leaves India to make London his home. He assumes different identities and travels the world. He suffers from an identity crisis and in order to overcome that, he decides to return to India and join a group of revolutionaries somewhere in the southern part of India. He doesn't have any connection with his history and seem removed from his roots. When Willie is in his 40s, he visits his sister Sarojini in Berlin. Willie lacks a mind of his own and so, he lets himself guided by his sister Sarojini. Sarojini is a more positive character, and she inspires Willie to try to bring about a change in the lives of the lower caste people. Previously, in Africa, Willie was an observer of revolutions and that was described by Naipaul in *Half a Life*. In *Magic Seeds*, Willie decides to join a revolution himself. Sarojini exhorts Willie to fight for a cause.

After returning to India in 20 years, Willie gradually immerses himself within the familiar space of India, his homeland. Willie gets to know the real India plagued by social ills such as casteism and exploitation. The reference to the villagers as 'matchstick people' implies that the rebels themselves, loathed the villagers, whom the former had promised to protect. All these incidents make Willie realise the futility of the revolution that he had joined before with so much zeal. However, the moment of realisation or anagnorisis for Willie is the moment when he understands that his fellow comrades are themselves loathsome people who haven't joined the movement out of any higher goals. Their own lives are warped and misspent and they had joined the revolution simply to seek personal revenge. Revolution gives these revolutionaries a chance to exercise their

authority over the marginalised people. Thus, they are just another side of the same coin. They act like the exploitative state machinery. Willie again suffers from an existential crisis. He is involved in a movement that is Stalinist in nature and believes in class liquidation. Their exploitation reaches such an extent that they start killing wealthy landowners because they have money. According to Jordi Xifra, “Through the Gramscian theories of ideology and hegemony, ideology becomes the territory where hegemony is constructed” (Xifra 201). Thus, the ideology that the revolutionaries practise is actually created for the sake of hegemony. They are just another side of the same coin. Their façade of helping the poor villagers is nothing but a sham. In one of his letters to Sarojini, Willie writes,

I don't have to tell you that I came into this thing with the purest of hearts and the wish to do what with your teaching and the promptings of my own mind had begun to seem to me to be right. But now I must tell you I feel I am lost. I don't know what cause I am serving, and why I am doing what I do. (Naipaul 66)

Willie is unwittingly involved in a murder of a landlord and eventually, lands in jail. He is finally bailed out by Roger who is a friend of Willie. The reason why Willie is released from prison is also weird. The authorities find out that Willie is a published author and that prompts them to release Willie. This incident is a critique of the legal system of India and also, shows the absurdity of the system.

The second part of the novel *Magic Seeds* begins in London where Willie travels

after his release from prison in India. Willie also realises that at his age when he is nearing 50, it is foolish to expect to change the world. This realisation on a micro plane reflects the realisation of Willie. Similarly, on a macro level, Naipaul wants his readers to believe that revolutions may not always be successful. Their so-called lofty goals may have futile ends. This especially happens when the revolutionaries are detached from the masses.

When Willie joins Roger and Perdita in London, he finds that the duo was part of an orderly world. They had money and unlike the poor villagers whom Willie had encountered during his stay in India, Willie and Perdita were well established. Yet, they lacked a meaning or purpose in their lives. Thus, it can be said that meaning or purpose in life is a complicated matter and may not be always linked to the affluence of the characters. Willie actively listens to Roger just as he had done to Sarojini and responds to Roger's experiences of life. Thus, the characters of *Magic Seeds* represent the aimless and misguided youths of the contemporary times.

It is an irony that after spending so many years in that fruitless revolution, Willie is still the misguided youth and doesn't undergo any substantial change in character. He only realises that it is pointless to try to change the world. Even at the end of the novel, Willie is lost. The concluding sections of the novel indicate that it may not always be possible to read the past and comprehend what is happening in the present.

V. S. Naipaul himself was confused about his identity and existence. He was born in 1932 to a Hindu family in Trinidad. Thus, he experienced the colonisation of India by

the British and secondly, his family was forced to migrate from India because of economic compulsions. Thus, the conflict between the centre and the margins came into the life of Naipaul from the very beginning. He understood that Trinidad was part of the margin while the entire world was Euro-centric. This conflict between the centre and the margins form a substantial chunk in the plot of his novels. Later, wherever Naipaul went as a novelist, he observed the world as an outsider and tried to figure out the intricacies arising out of the binaries of an insider and an outsider. Naipaul had travelled the world, Oxford, London, Africa, India, South America and even the United States. Kerry McSweeney feels about Naipaul, “Moreover, the themes that inform Naipaul's later fiction—homelessness, the absence of society or community, the sense of inauthenticity and loss, the mingled anxiety and acedia — are hardly peculiar to him or to those of similarly marginal cultural and social backgrounds. They are rather representative aspects of the condition of modern man” (McSweeney 154). Therefore, Willie’s rootlessness in *Magic Seeds* represents the confused state of modern man.

Another thing that struck Naipaul was the tendency of people to imitate the habits of the ruling class without caring for their own roots. He believed that the class system was primarily responsible for this kind of imitative behaviour. To cite an example, Perdita decorates her house in slavish imitation of the upper-class houses that she has seen without realizing the relevance or appropriateness of such renovations. According to Naipaul, people have no sense of the narrative to which they belong. Even the scene where the son of a West Indian diplomat marries a white woman because his father wanted a white grandchild speaks of the reluctance of this man to identify himself with

his own community. This reluctance to identify with the own community can be seen in *Magic Seeds* as well. This also encourages Willie to think that it's impossible to have an ideal view of the world. "It is wrong to have an ideal view of the world. That's where the mischief starts. That's where everything starts unraveling. But I can't write to Sarojini about that" (Naipaul 294). If we delve deep into the background of Willie, we find that he is the son of a Brahmin father and a low-caste mother who married after being inspired by the ideas of Gandhi. Thus, the very birth of Willie is a result of confusion and a futile aspiration to come out of that confusion. Willie moves to London to pursue his higher education, but he again engages in sexual promiscuity that eventually leads him adrift.

Towards the beginning of *Magic Seeds*, we find the same confusion. Willie is chastised by his sister Sarojini for not having a purpose in life. Sarojini exhorts Willie to join a guerilla force that is somewhere operational in the southern states of India. Sarojini describes Kandapalli, the leader of the rebels, as the most important man in the world. Sarojini's narrative proves that Willie has been unable to take decisions on his own and it is Sarojini who guides him from behind. However, when Willie goes to join the revolution, he understands that he is among the wrong set of people. Willie's fellow revolutionaries are nothing but romantics who have no connection with reality. They hate the villagers and call them names. "They began to think of the villagers as enemies, though they depended on them for water and food" (Naipaul 127). One of Willie's fellow revolutionaries Einstein joined the revolution because he had failed as a Mathematician. Willie realises that again he has landed himself in a confused state. Willie starts writing letters to his sister Sarojini explaining his precarious situation. Eventually, Willie gets

ready to kill a wealthy landowner that leads him to his arrest. Willie, in jail, finds himself surrounded by Marxist literature that is tedious and verbose. Thus, Naipaul seems to suggest that the texts that inspire revolutions are often aloof from the reality. Even Willie's release from the prison after being discovered that he is some kind of a pioneer of Indian writing is frivolous. Naipaul's critique encompasses the judicial system as well.

Other instances in the novel indicate the confused dynamics that determine the relationship among the different classes of people. Willie, after returning to London, starts an affair with Perdita, Roger's wife whom he had desired thirty years earlier. Roger, his friend, recounts how he had an affair with Marian, an amateur artist who had taken care of his father. Roger also admitted that his affair with Marian was the result of his sexual fetish for the lower classes. Sex, in Naipaul's novels assumes a metaphoric significance. Sex for the characters is a means to eradicate history. As mentioned earlier, Marcus, the West Indian diplomat wants his son to be married to a white woman because he wanted a white grandchild. Thus, he wanted to erase his own history through sex. Similarly, Willie starts having an affair with Perdita because he wanted to hide himself from his own blunders of life that he had committed in the past. Roger too is sexually promiscuous because he wanted a space of comfort from the uncomfortable realities of life.

R.S. Jhanji argues that Naipaul's works "are based on the idea of dislocation, marginality and the loss of authentic modes of life as a result of the experience of colonisation. These are related to the social, economic, historical, political and cultural

barriers, which are now part of the emergent Third World” (Jhanji 17). The ‘magic seeds’ in the novel represent the misplaced hopes that often appear in the form of meaningless sex, a delusional revolution or amateur art that has no relevance in real life. Willie’s transformation completes a full circle towards the end of the novel when he realises that it is wrong to have an ideal view of the world. Perhaps, that is the greatest transformation that can be witnessed in Willie. However, when Willie says that he won’t be able to divulge to Sarojini how he has come to the realisation that it is impossible to have an ideal view of the world, it again brings to the fore how Willie is still confused about his realisations of life. Thus, it might be possible that the changes in Willie’s life are superficial and again, he might transcend into a confused state.

The next novel that comes up for discussion is *The Inheritance of Loss*. The novel written by Kiran Desai is about the fluidity of borders and the impact that it has on the lives of the characters. Therefore, it is evident that a significant transformation of self takes place in the novel. The characters are positioned in different spheres of socio-economic and political planes and their lives bring forth the dynamics that are at play in the wider world on a macro level as well as in the space of family on a micro level.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, many countries were decolonised. Furthermore, with air travel becoming easier, people traveled because of work, and this gave rise to a genre of literature called the diasporic literature. Multiculturalism, an offshoot of Postmodernism, also encouraged the rise of diasporic literature. Thus, we find the presence of multi-ethnic societies. Margarida Martins comments on globalisation,

“When we transgress or cross borders or referential spaces, meaning is not lost but transformed, incorporated into a broader concept. Moving from the familiar to the unknown, is also the movement from the specific to the general, from the local to the global – that is characteristic of globalisation” (Martins 440). This globalisation has resulted in characters being subjected to various changes brought forth by diaspora, economic changes, political disturbances, etc. This chapter analyses the changes that can be witnessed in characters of the novel.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, we hardly find any inter-generational differences in the context of diaspora unlike the works of Jhumpa Lahiri where inter-generational difference is a huge contributing factor in the diasporic perception by the characters. There are albeit different cultural strains that are present in the plot. Jemubhai, the anglophile judge adores British customs so much that he abandons his own Gujarati rituals and customs. This leads to his alienation from his community and also, leads to marital discord. On the other hand, his own granddaughter, having studied in an English medium school is much more fluent in English than Hindi. Biju never wants to be a part of the mainstream American culture although he goes to the US because he wants to be materialistically successful there. It is to be noted that Biju often indulged in nostalgia, remembering his father and his village days. Such remembrances are absent in the judge when he was in England. They inherit elements of multiple cultures and that affects their family dynamics. In the process, the characters evolve and change owing to their positioning within different social spaces. Thus, a transformation of self can also be witnessed throughout the plot. The novel ends with the reconfirmation of family

relationships within the context of diaspora. The process of negotiation that the characters undertake through unfamiliar geographical, cultural and emotional terrains has a bearing on their psyche and selves. Thus, ultimately, they change, and this affects their family relationships as well.

Bhabha's use of mimicry can be used to explain the conduct of the characters. The judge travels to England because he felt that England would be the best country to pursue his higher studies in law. However, the judge lives a marginalised existence in England because he is discriminated against. His idea of an egalitarian society in England is proven false. When he returns to India, he becomes an unfamiliar figure among his countrymen because of his habits that were imbibed from England. Bhabha had said in his *The Location of Culture* that mimicry 'appropriates' the other because it visualizes power. The same holds true for the judge who had tried to mimic the British because he felt that it would give him a sense of power.

The Inheritance of Loss advocates that culture can never be a fixed site of meaning. The two protagonists of the novel prove this point because Biju resists all attempts to participate in the mainstream American culture whereas, the judge desperately tries to be a part of the British culture when he studies in England. The irony is that in both cases, Biju and the judge are marginalised. They can never be one with their respective host society.

Kiran Desai presents two classes in the novel. The first class comprises of the upper middle class Anglicised people like the retired judge Jemubhai Patel and her grand-

daughter Sai. The other members of this class are Lola, Noni, Mrs. Sen, etc. The second class of people that finds mention in the novel is that of the marginalised subaltern people. The cook, his son, Biju, Gyan and others fall in this group. Therefore, the lives of the two classes of people are starkly different from one another. The transformation of self seen in the two classes of characters is also very different. There are some other characters who are Anglicised, yet they are treated as outsiders. A case in point is Father Booty who has been in India for several decades but one fine morning, he is suddenly deported. Thus, the characterisation is complex and since, the dynamics of relationships is always evolving, it is interesting to note the change that they undergo during the course of the plot.

There is a deep sense of mistrust between the two classes mentioned above. Noni, one of the minor characters in the novel comments, “it was important to draw the lines properly between classes or it harmed everyone on both sides of the great divide” (Desai 67). The characters of the Anglicised community do not trust the local Nepali folks. Thus, the ‘divide’ mentioned above gradually leads to a trust deficit among the different characters. Lola comments about their Nepali servant, “Budhoo? But he’s a Nepali. Who can trust him now? It is always the watchman in a case of robbery” (Desai 43). Thus, these lines prove that fissures have erupted within the society and this causes the relationships dynamics to change.

The Gorkhaland agitation is constantly present in the backdrop and the resistance movement serves as a catalyst in moulding and shaping the characters. The Gorkhaland

movement is essentially an identity movement that gradually turns into an insurgency in the Darjeeling Himalayas. A Gorkha leader comments, “We are labourers in tea plantations, coolies dragging heavy loads. And are we allowed to become doctors and government workers, owners of the tea plantations? No! We are kept at the level of servants” (Desai 158). The local Gorkhas feel that a separate Gorkhaland state will be the panacea to all problems.

Characters like Biju, on the other hand, want to settle in the US. However, he is treated as an outsider there and has to constantly run from pillar to post to legitimise his stay. Staying in the US on forged papers, Biju is exploited by everyone because Biju constantly fears that he might get caught by the police and deported to India. Thus, Biju is an outsider who has no place to stay, both literally and metaphorically, in the US. The novel speaks about binaries. In the hill town of Kalimpong, there are outsiders and insiders. The local population feels that they are outsiders because the wealth is in the hands of the Anglicised community and the Nepal is work only as servants or do menial jobs. Similarly, in Manhattan, a migrant worker like Biju finds himself in precarious conditions because he is in the US on forged papers. Thus, he is an ‘outsider’ in the US.

Interestingly, every character is treated as an outsider at some point in their lives. The retired judge is marginalised when he goes to England to pursue a career in law. The young Jemu is so humiliated that he becomes psychologically deranged. After he returns to India, he expects his wife to be fluent in English and behave in a sophisticated manner. However, Jemu’s wife Nimi could never master English customs and manners and

eventually, Jemu kills her and passes off the incident as a suicide. Jemubhai could never associate himself with the local Indians or the places where he was posted. In fact, he could never associate with his ancestral place called Piphit. Thus, he was always a rootless man. Even in Kalimpong, he lives in a decrepit house called Cho-Oyu where he prefers not to have visitors. His only companion is the dog Mutt. When his old friend Bose comes to Kalimpong, the judge refuses to meet him.

Biju was a rootless man too. He had big dreams when he migrated to the US on forged papers. Biju represents the thousands of illegal immigrants who land up in the US solely because of economic reasons. They are constantly hounded by the police and are always on the run. They live in despicable poverty. Since people from third world countries like India, Nepal offer cheap labour, Biju and his ilk are much desired by employers.

From other kitchens, he was learning what the world thought of Indians: In Tanzania, if they could, they would throw them out like they did in Uganda. In Madagascar, if they could, they would throw them out. In Nigeria, if they could, they would throw them out. (Desai 77)

Thus, it is evident that Biju and his companions are rootless just like the judge. They literally live a marginalised life and are always threatened by the law enforcement agencies. The judge and Biju come from entirely different socio-economic backgrounds. The judge is a qualified barrister from England while Biju comes from a poor family. Yet, both of them face the same rootlessness. It is significant to note that for the judge,

the preferred country was England while for Biju, the preferred country is the US. The answer to this is the time period during which the two characters migrate. Jayashree Palit comments, “The Cook and Gyan are two characters whose lives are marked by the struggle for modernity on the other hand, middle class characters like Lola and Noni proudly invest in British jam and Marks and Spencer underpants. They imagine themselves as part of a western community and look down on those who have not succeeded in emitting western commodities and culture to the same extent that they have” (Palit 51). Therefore, it can be said that almost all the characters in the novel are marginalised to some extent. This alienation causes marked changes in their selves throughout the plot.

The love affair between Sai and Gyan is another example of the factor of rootlessness that creeps inside the narrative. Sai’s tutor Gyan is a local who, initially, hasn’t thought much about identity. But as time passes by, both Sai and Gyan realises their socio-cultural differences. This realisation becomes all the more pertinent because in the background, the Gorkhaland agitation is taking place. They also realise that they are on two sides of the fence since the Gorkhas consider outsiders like the judge and Sai primarily responsible for the marginalisation of hill people. The Gorkhaland movement provides a platform to Gyan to search for his identity. This quest for identity gradually sours the relationship between the two. Gyan tells Sai, “You are like slaves, that’s what you are, running after west, embarrassing yourself. It’s because of people like you we never get somewhere” (Desai 163). Gyan is ridiculed by the judge just as the judge was mocked at in England when he went there to pursue law. The difference in the two cases

is that the perpetrators are different. In the judge's case, it was the British who ridiculed Jemubhai. In the case of Gyan, an Indian ridicules his fellow countrymen just because the latter comes from an inferior socio-economic background.

Gramsci argues in his *Prison Notebooks*, "The revolution which the bourgeois class has brought into the conception of law, and hence into the function of the State, consists especially in the will to conform" (Gramsci 260). Gramsci further says,

But what does that signify if not that by 'State' should be understood not only the apparatus of government, but also the 'private' apparatus of 'hegemony' or civil society? It should be noted how from this critique of the State which does not intervene, which trails behind events, etc. there is born the dictatorial ideological current of the Right, with its reinforcement of the executive, etc. (Gramsci 261)

This explanation helps to analyse the characters of the judge and others who are technically outsiders in Kalimpong because they are non-Gorkhas. However, these characters have occupied the higher stations of the society and so, someone like Gyan now considers the judge and his family as class enemies. Therefore, the definition of hegemony can be found in smaller circles as well, namely, family, inter-personal relationships, etc.

In order to avenge his humiliation, Gyan passes on the information of the judge's hunting rifle to the Gorkhaland insurgents who, in turn, decide to rob the judge's house.

Gyan also gets involved entirely for the cause of the Gorkhaland movement and this takes a toll on his affair with Sai. The irony is that the Gorkhaland insurgents are fighting for the rights of the marginalised hill people. Yet, when Biju returns from the US, he is robbed of his belongings by the Gorkhaland insurgents although Biju himself is a poor man. Biju is robbed by the Gorkhaland insurgents simply because he is a non-Gorkha or an outsider. Thus, Kiran Desai seems to complicate the matter of outsiders and insiders. However, the concluding section of the novel offers hope. The last few pages of the novel describe the return of Biju. The robbing of Biju by the insurgents appears to highlight the importance of filial love, devoid of any material expectations. The last page of the novel where the cook meets his son against the backdrop of the shining Kanchenjunga is another example of unadulterated love. There are other indications of positivity as well. The judge's dog Mutt is lost but there is a chance that Mutt might return. The novelist even hints at the fact that the love affair between Sai and Gyan might be renewed later. Thus, Kiran Desai seems to hint that human love is the solution to the complications brought forth by the agents of globalisation, race, nation, identity. The novel also shows a distinct transformation of self. As already mentioned, Gyan transforms into a different self after participating in the Gorkhaland movement. Sai also realises her socio-economic differences with Gyan during the course of the plot. The relationship between the cook and Biju changes since Biju returns to India at the end of the novel. Their love is strengthened, and the cook also harbours no false illusions now about Biju. The filial love reigns supreme. The retired judge also shows sparks of human love through the demonstrations of his affection towards his dog Mutt. Thus, against the backdrop of the

Gorkhaland insurgency, the political disturbances arising out of the conflicts among race, nation, identity human love starts to blossom. The transformation of selves is also marked and perhaps, therein, lies the success of the novel.

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* is set against the backdrop of the Naxalite movement just like Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084*. *The Lowland* uses a realistic setting by continuously referring to the actual leaders of the rebellion. The prominent leaders of the movement such as Charu Majumdar, Kanu Sanyal have been referred to in the novel. Furthermore, Jhumpa Lahiri recounts the actual incidents that had happened in Naxalbari in West Bengal. The incidents had given birth to the Naxalite revolution that had rocked Bengal in the 1960s.

For generations they'd (tribal peasants) lived under a feudal system that hadn't substantially changed. They were manipulated by wealthy landowners. They were pushed off fields they'd cultivated, denied revenue from crops they'd grown. They were preyed upon by moneylenders.
(Lahiri 20)

Thus, under such circumstances, the peasants of Naxalbari revolted. Jhumpa Lahiri then goes on to describe the incidents that happened in Calcutta during the Naxalite rebellion. As part of the description, Jhumpa Lahiri mentions that the shooting of people in front of their family members by the police was a fairly common occurrence during contemporary time.

The Lowland describes the family saga of two brothers: Subhash and Udayan. Udayan was the one who got influenced by the Naxalite ideology. During his student days, he eagerly listened to the lectures of Kanu Sanyal and Charu Majumdar, two contemporary Naxal leaders. Although his father tries to desist his son Udayan from joining the Naxals, the latter is eager to fight against the state.

No, Baba. The United Front thinks it's won, but it's failed. Look at what's happening. What is happening? People are reacting. Naxalbari is an inspiration. It's an impetus for change. (Lahiri 23)

Udayan felt that Mao's thoughts had brought in a change in China. Similarly, India will also witness a change owing to the impact of the Naxalite revolution.

The Sanskrit word 'Udayan' means sunrise. True to his name, Udayan joins hands with the rebels and dreams of making "a new sun and a new moon shine in the sky of our great motherland." (Lahiri 33)

Even when Udayan falls in love with Gauri, he buys her Marx's Manifesto and Rousseau's Confessions. His love life is shadowed by the Naxalite revolution. Udayan says, "The spark in Darjeeling will start a prairie fire and will certainly set the vast expanses of India ablaze" (Lahiri 27). On the other hand, his brother Subhash decides to go to the US to pursue higher studies. Udayan is ultimately killed by the police. The description of his killing by Jhumpa Lahiri is a chilling reminder of how the police killed young men in cold blood.

Now he stood at the edge of a lowland, in the enclave where he'd lived all his life ... They asked him nothing. They untied his hands, then pointed indicating that he was to walk in a certain direction now, again with his hands raised over his head. Slowly, he heard them say. Make sure to pause after every step For a fraction of a second he heard the explosion tearing through his lungs. A sound like gushing water or a torrent of wind. A sound that belonged to the fixed forces of the world, that then took him out of the world. The silence was pure now. (Lahiri 339)

After Udayan is killed, Subhash returns to Calcutta. Failing to gather any response from his parents about the circumstances leading to Udayan's death, Subhash decides to marry Gauri who was pregnant at that time with Udayan's child. Subhash takes Gauri, Udayan's wife, to the US. Gauri gives birth to Bela. Subhash takes care of Bela as a loving father and never lets Gauri miss Udayan. Yet, there is a void in their marital relation. When Bela is twelve, Subhash takes her to Calcutta so that the latter can identify herself with her roots. However, Bela is more familiar with her life in the US. She decides to become an environmentalist. In the meantime, Gauri decides to stay separately and pursue doctoral studies. She feels guilt that she has betrayed Udayan. After many years, she decides to travel back to Calcutta and visit the lowland where Udayan was murdered. However, the lowland is now no longer there and in its place, highrises have come up. Gauri decides to commit suicide but fails to do so and instead, comes back to the US. Meanwhile, Subhash reveals to Bela that he is not her biological father. He also

tells her who her real father is. Bela gets angry at Gauri and accuses her of deserting the family.

The happenings in the plot indicate the novelist's adept handling of human relationships. Human relationships in the novel undergo an upheaval because they are set against turbulent times. Jhumpa Lahiri showcases the social space in great detail and also, highlights the atrocities committed by the state machinery. The description of Udayan's killing is one such example. However, the novelist also feels that owing to revolutions such as the Naxalite movement, human relationships crumble and families suffer. Youths lay down their lives for the sake of upholding the goals of equality and liberty but at the same time, their actions have a cascading effect on their families.

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* is essentially a feminist novel. There are two kinds of feminism that are portrayed in the novel. Gauri, the Naxal sympathiser, embodies an individual kind of feminism. Gauri forsakes her family and relationships in order to pursue a career in Philosophy. Her daughter Bela, on the other hand, practices a kind of eco-feminism. She takes up organic farming and abandons her plan to pursue higher studies in order to become a proletariat. She lives an anti-capitalist lifestyle and becomes a single unwed mother.

The characterisation in *The Lowland* is important. Jhumpa Lahiri focuses on the nuances of relationship that arises from the fact that a mother rejected her child in order to pursue her career. The novel also embodies the pain that a husband endures while trying to do good to his wife. The ending of the novel however speaks of possibilities, a

possible ending of the relationship between mother and daughter. The ending of the novel is in that way, similar to *The Inheritance of Loss* where there are possibilities of a resurgence of the filial relationship between the cook and his son, Biju.

Jhumpa Lahiri successfully draws the traumatic period of Kolkata when the Naxalite rebellion happened. She portrayed the characters and their turbulent selves that were largely affected by the happenings during the contemporary time. Her characters are evolutionary. Lev Grossman is of the opinion, “The true subject of *The Lowland* is time. Lahiri tracks, with the patience and tenacity of a biologist researching long-term migrations, the emotional and geographical distances that time opens up between people, the things that get lost in those spaces, and the rare and surprising things that endure. In *The Lowland*, we are all emigrants, not from one country to another but from the present to the future” (Grossman 64). Thus, it is no wonder that the characters in the novel undergo tremendous changes in their perceptions. Gauri, for instance, evolves as a character. When she was Udayan’s wife, she belonged to a lower middle-class family background. Her values and thinking process were shaped by her socio-cultural upbringing. However, after moving to the US, she gradually undergoes a change. She becomes more independent and decides to take charge of her own life. We find a marked deviation in her life’s goals. As already mentioned she decides to pursue a career in Philosophy and eventually, completes her Ph.D. from the US. This is significant, considering the fact that she came from a humble background when she was living in Calcutta. Similarly, we find changes in Subhash’s character as well. He decides to marry Gauri in order to save her from the ignominy of a Naxal’s widow. However, his marriage

with Gauri is an unhappy one and when Gauri leaves Subhash, the latter decides to single-handedly raise Bela, their daughter. Jhumpa Lahiri paints the father-daughter duo in a very poignant manner. Even their relationship undergoes change. When Bela gets to know from Subhash that the latter is not her biological father, she reacts in a matured way. However, her perception of Gauri changes and she refuses to accept her as her mother when Gauri visits Bela. The relationship between Subhash and his mother changes because of the former's decision to marry Gauri. When Subhash's mother is about to die of old age, Subhash visits her.

But now the distance between them was not merely physical, or even emotional. It was intractable. It triggered a delayed burst of responsibility in Subhash. An attempt, once it no longer mattered, to be present. Every year for the following three years he travelled back to Calcutta in winter, to see her. He sat beside her, reading newspapers, drinking tea with her. Feeling as cut off as Bela must have felt, from Gauri. (Lahiri 268)

Furthermore, Bela becomes fiercely independent and decides to live her life on anti-capitalist terms. She takes up organic farming and becomes a single unwed mother. It is as if she lives her life similar to Udayan's who had chosen a path of rebellion. This independence in her causes a concern in Subhash who thinks that Udayan has woken up from his grave to claim Bela. There is a distinct similarity between Udayan and Bela in their outlook towards life.

The Lowland is a realist fiction. The individual characters are drawn in a detailed manner and the characters are dynamic. They evolve during the course of the narrative. The everyday specifics mentioned by the novelist in the novel lend that degree of credibility in the novel. The siblings Subhash and Udayan are unique, yet they both are the products of the turmoil that was present in contemporary times. Their lives indicate the choices that were present to the youths of that era. One brother dies for an ideal while the other is satisfied with his comfort zone of higher education and the cloistered life of a scientist. When the plot moves to the US, the intergenerational factors come into play. While Subhash and Gauri try to settle in the US, their daughter Bela abandons her roots and finds her calling in the outdoors. She takes an interest in the community and goes on to become a farmer. Ironically, Bela's transformation is similar to Udayan's because the latter too was interested to bring about a change in his community. She represents her generation. She is not concerned about history or her past. Whatever needs to be known can always be obtained from the internet. In a way, Bela represents her biological father. Udayan too, had chosen an incognito life. He was one of the hundreds of Naxalite cadres who were fighting against the state. Similarly, when he was killed, he was just one of the innumerable faceless youths who were killed by the police. Even the place where he was killed eventually gave way to high-rises and buildings. Thus, Udayan had become an unknown citizen. Similarly, Bela chooses a nameless existence. Her name does not yield any result when googled. She is not present in any social media. Therefore, like Udayan, she prefers to work, away from the limelight.

Unlike Jhumpa Lahiri's first novel *The Namesake*, *The Lowland* isn't always

about emigrant experiences. The diaspora is just a stage machinery that influences the plot. However, having said that, Jhumpa Lahiri, being the quintessential diaspora writer, aptly draws her characters who are alienated in a diasporic setting. Thus, we find Gauri ill at ease when she first moves to the US with Subhash. However, she gradually becomes familiar with the host society and finds her comfort zone there. In order to overcome her grief, she immerses herself in higher study. Tom Wilhelmus feels that Gauri embarks on an academic career in order to sustain herself emotionally and financially. “An immigrant from Calcutta fleeing a troubled past, she abandoned her husband and young daughter, moved to California and pursued an academic career. Her decision to leave one family in India and then another in America was shocking, of course, but apparently necessary if she was not to become merely a victim of her culture and gender. Her intellectual pursuits were the means of escape” (Wilhelmus 748). Thus, for her, the definition of home slowly changes. The marriage between Subhash and Gauri is just a threadbare affair, devoid of any passion or love. Their marriage is born out of grief, male chivalry and wishful thinking. Their marriage doesn’t witness any real transformation. However, we do notice changes in the characters and their positioning within the family space as well as the outer world.

When Gauri decides to visit the lowland of Tollygunj after a long time, she finds that the lowland has vanished and in its place, high-rises have come up. Thus, for her, the familiar place of the lowland is no more. She decides to commit suicide but fails to do so. There is a marked change in her life. In earlier years, she was overwhelmed by grief when Udayan was killed. But now, she has a life of her own. She knows that there is

hope in her new home in the US. Thus, there is a transformation of self in the character of Gauri. She understands now that she has come a long way from the lowlands of Tollygunj. Life has actually moved a lot and she has to remain content with her present circumstances. Her social positioning has changed a lot from the space where she was, before her marriage to Subhash.

Even Udayan experiences a change in his outlook. When he kills the police officer, he is a hardcore Naxalite rebel. However, he knows that this death will one day become his nemesis. When Udayan is surrounded by the police in the marshland of Tollygunj, Udayan remembers Gauri. He feels a sense of remorse and realises that his actions have done no good to his family members. Thus, even the character of Udayan witnesses a change that can be observed during the course of the plot.

The Naxal revolution of Bengal can be described in the Gramscian definition of “passive revolution” (Gramsci 46). According to Gramsci, “passive revolution” is a revolution “without mass participation” (46). In *The Lowland*, it can be seen that not all the characters believe in the cause that Udayan fought for. Therefore, it can be safely inferred that the revolution was without mass participation. Perhaps, that was the reason why cadres like Udayan ultimately understood that the cause that they were fighting for may not be worthy at all. This also implied that certain changes in the evolution of the character were imminent because at the beginning of the plot, a character like Udayan had certain perceptions while just before his death, doubts had crept in. The same shift in belief can be noticed in Gauri. Her character changes according to the narrative. When

she realises that her marital relationship with Subhash is not going to fructify, she immerses herself in higher studies. This ultimately affects her marital relationship as well as her relationship with her daughter Bela.

The use of hyperboles by Jhumpa Lahiri while describing the Naxal phase signifies the heightened tensions that characterise the period. Similarly, the use of longer, descriptive sentences while describing the diasporic spaces indicate the turbulence in the inter-personal relationships that arise because of the shift in home spaces. The imageries employed by the novelist such as the grieving mother paying homage to her martyred son, the patriarchy, the typical socio-cultural contexts in contemporary Bengal where a widow is looked down upon are poignantly executed. The non-linear narrative adds subtlety to the novel and also, helps in the gradual evolution of the characters. Furthermore, the overlapping of the political and the personal emphasises how the political violence at the backdrop acts as a catalyst in taking forward the narrative. The characters are also moulded and influenced by the Naxal movement that acts as the leitmotif in the novel. It is the central pivot that directs the movement of the plot and the characters.

The protagonist Supratik in *The Lives of Others* written by Neel Mukherjee is the descendant of a family that has interests in the paper business. In other words, Supratik is a member of the bourgeoisie. He closely observes how the gap between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie widens and it is this gap that concerns youths like Supratik. The laissez faire economy that has encouraged families like Supratik's to set up industry in

Bengal and thereafter, exploit poor people was a new trend in the 1960s. This tendency of a particular social class to dominate Bengal gradually gave rise to a resistance movement like the Naxalite revolution that was an uprising against the existing social structure. Supratik felt that he lived in a borrowed house, and it was time then to leave and live on his own. He mentioned this in a farewell note to his mother. This farewell note written by Supratik to his mother indicates how Supratik was unfamiliar in his own house. Thus, it can be said that the novelist has problematised the definition of home. Supratik's father was completely different from his son. He used to say, "Khaddar and charka and cottage industries are not going to feed us. We'll remain a nation of loincloth clad, rib-showing beggars if we go down that route. The industries are controlled by the British and we should do business with them for our own good. In this he had been indoctrinated by what he had seen in his childhood during the Swadeshi movement in the 1900s" (Mukherjee 192). Similar to Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*, *The Lives of Others* also symbolises the oscillation between binaries. There is a constant to and fro movement between possessing and renouncing, between the allegiance to a revolution and the allegiance to a stable family life conforming to the order prescribed by the society.

Like Udayan in *The Lowland*, Supratik, the protagonist in *The Lives of Others*, decides to join the Naxalites after working among the tribal peasants. He becomes part of the resistance group that is functional in Calcutta. In a way, Supratik is similar to Udayan of *The Lowland* or Brati of *Mother of 1084* because he is the only member in the family who feels threatened and marginalised. The other members of Supratik's family do not join the Naxals and instead follow other pursuits. Supratik's brother becomes a drug

addict while another cousin becomes a professor of mathematics at Stanford.

The Lives of Others contains micro sites of power politics that represent the tussle of power politics seen on a macro plane. Michael Wessels observes, “The novel portrays the micro-levels of power within the domestic sphere in forensic detail. Supratik’s story of the Naxalite struggle alternates with the stories of the struggles of the people who inhabit the Ghosh household in Calcutta” (Wessels 1038). The Ghosh family and the house where they reside are hierarchically structured. Supratik’s aunt Purba lives on the ground floor while the other members live on floors above. Purba is relatively a weaker member of the family and therefore, her dwelling is also below the rest of the family. The servants too eat different food, stay in small rooms and work for long hours, thereby, depicting exploitation. One such servant is Madan who lives a marginalised existence in the household.

Thus, the conditions of the Ghosh family give the readers a hint of the exploitative social space that the novel depicts. Supratik documents the harsh conditions that surround the poor tribal peasants of Orissa. He describes his experiences in the unposted letters that were intended for his aunt Purba. The stories of domination, subjugation, repression move Supratik so much that he decides to fight against the state by joining the Naxalites. Thus, there is a hint that Supratik will undergo a change in his self because of his experiences of living with the tribal peasants.

Like Udayan, Supratik also falls into a dilemma after he witnesses acts of violence where the Naxalites murder people. He is disgusted at his own acts of violence

and undergoes changes towards his allegiance to the organization. In this respect, Supratik is similar to *The Lowland's* Udayan. However, there is a difference between Udayan and Supratik. Supratik's involvement in violence hardens him further. Thus, when he returns to the family after two and a half years, he does not pay heed to his parents' concerns. The most horrific reaction comes from Supratik when he admonishes Madan, the family servant. Madan asks Supratik if being kind to one's parents is better than doing good for the unknown mass of people. Madan was actually referring to Supratik's behaviour towards his mother. Supratik does not take this advice lightly and feels that it is unbecoming on the part of a servant to give a lesson in morality to his master. The novelist describes the rebuke of Madan by Supratik in the following way:

Madan now visibly flinches as the hissing, which is what Supratik's words have become, hits him. Supratik knows that somebody who is not a servant in their home can easily retaliate with the argument that Madan's advice to him, that one must pay heed to the private over the public, otherwise one is inviting disaster in, is coherent for both situations, both Dulal's and Supratik's, but he also knows that Madan-da will not answer back because his station in life has not taught him how to. (Mukherjee 427)

Supratik commits a very heinous act when he frames the old servant in an incident of theft that he himself had committed to finance the revolution. As a result, Madan is arrested, tortured and eventually, committed suicide. Thus, Supratik does not necessarily

feel for the common human being although he claims to be fighting for the subalterns. Therefore, this incident shows how the character of Supratik has many shades, and it is through the course of the plot that the readers get to know how Supratik has changed from an idealist rebel to someone who cunningly implicates a poor servant in a case of theft. It is also to be noted that for Madan, suicide remains the only possible option. It proves how the doors of justice during contemporary times were closed for the common people. Fabio Frosini argues,

On the one hand, then, there is the equilibrium between force and consensus as the political effect of state power, and at the same time power as a 'condensation' of the organisation of the social forces in civil society: in sum, the integral state (as the hegemonic apparatus) as immanent to the dialectics of the forces conflicting in society and, at the same time, as a way to articulate and control them, and therefore - lastly - as an instance necessarily superimposed on a conflict that nonetheless cannot avoid expressing it. (Frosini 122)

The relationship between Supratik and Madan can be explained in the light of the above cited quotation on force and consensus. Madan knows very well that his position in the society does not allow him to contest Supratik's allegations. At the same time, we find the use of force in the background of the novel. So, the social space becomes the playground of force, consensus, etc. that give rise to conflicts.

As mentioned before, Supratik is a shaded character. He rejoices in the killing of

men by the Naxalites. He himself is responsible for Madan's death. Thus, there are instances where Supratik acts abhorrently.

Supratik himself realises his deviousness when he is tortured by the police. He regrets his involvement in the revolution much like Udayan of *The Lowland*. Somewhere, Neel Mukherjee wishes to draw the attention of the readers to the heinous acts of violence committed by Naxal rebels. One such instance is the plan to derail the express train that would be full of passengers. Such an action forces the reader to ponder over the question whether the violence initiated by the revolutionaries is at all worthy or not. Furthermore, the dream of the revolutionaries to challenge the state machinery and bring about a change in the social, political and economic spaces also comes under an iota of doubt. The evolution of the characters takes forward the narrative and it is through the changes in the protagonists' lives that we understand the subtle hints of grey that are there in a resistance movement like the Naxal revolution.

The 'others' in *The Lives of Others* refers to the marginalised sections of the society. However, the 'others' might also mean characters like Supratik who has become marginalised in his own house. He cannot identify himself with the values propagated by father or his uncles who represent the bourgeoisie of contemporary times.

The Lives of Others reflects contemporary times. We find striking workers protesting against the management. This was again typical of the time since the workers were aware of their rights and the workers were gradually getting inspired by movements such as the Naxalite revolution. There is a scene in the novel where Prafullanath goes to

meet the striking workers who have not been paid for a year. Prafullanath is “buoyant on rage” (Mukherjee 378) but soon realises that it would be foolish to confront the workers violently. The family considers the string workers as “a fully reared-up snake, hood engorged” (379). The imagery employed here reflects the deep sense of distrust that existed between the employers and the workers.

The distrust also existed among the family members who lived in an old mansion in Calcutta in apparent harmony. However, fissures ran deep among the family members and also among the different generations who were present. The novel is highly symbolic. Prafullanath represents the contemporary age. His age and illness depict the stasis that has set in the social space of contemporary Bengal. His four sons Adityanath, Priyonath, Bholanath and Somnath are all incompetent and driven to bad habits that ultimately bring their downfall. The female characters drawn by the novelist are symbolic as well. Chhaya, Prafullanath’s only daughter is an influential member of the Ghosh family. She enjoys the patronage of most of the male members of the family and she, with her acerbic tongue, tries to create problems in everyone’s life. Her name is also symbolic. Her name means shadow and that refers to her dusky complexion. On the other hand, Purba, the widow of Somnath is relegated to a state of marginality. Both these women characters represent two extremes. The character of Chhaya proves that family is not a safe place either. There is also a hint of an incestuous relationship between Chhaya and her brother Priyo. This also points towards the decadent society of contemporary Bengal. There are other dark secrets in the family as well. Chhaya’s attempted suicide is hushed up.

The narrative of *The Lives of Others* shuttles between the third person narrative and the first person narrative in the form of a diary that Supratik writes for Purba but will never be able to show her. The dual narrative style serves the purpose of showing the two sides of Bengal: the one celebrating the British imperialist victories and the other representing the anti-colonial sentiment. These events set the background to the novel. The Ghosh family has never seen the turbulence of the independence movement. Nor have they experienced the Bengal famine or any other such calamity. However, both the children of Adinath rebels against their family in completely divergent ways. Suranjan becomes a drug addict. He represents the state of amnesia that the Ghosh family had fallen into with no understanding of the reality. The other sibling Supratik wants to move away from his privileges and join the ranks and file of the proletariats.

There are instances in the novel where the characters have undergone changes in their socio-economic states. An example is the character of Swarnendu Ghosh who is the professor of Mathematics at Stanford. The first epilogue of the novel announces the conferring of the Fields Medal to Swarnendu Ghosh for his contribution in the field of Mathematics. Swarnendu Ghosh is none other than Sona, the son of Purba who had all along been neglected by the Ghosh family. When Swarnendu is given the award, he remembers Professor Ashish Roy or 'mad Ashu' as he was called. Professor Ashish Roy was a Mathematical genius with whom Swarnendu was in correspondence with.

The inscription on the Fields Medal read, 'Transire suum pectus mundoque potiri' which meant 'To rise above oneself and to master the world'. The individuals who

Swarnendu knew such as mad Ashu or Supratik or his uncle Adinath all wanted to rise above themselves but failed. Thus, the transformation that can be witnessed in Swarnendu's character is in other words, the ability to rise above oneself. It can also be summed up by saying that the entire novel is about the transformation of the characters against the backdrop of the decadent Bengal society and the Naxalite revolution.

Class oppression and the absence of communication among the different strata of the society are evident in the novel. The complexities and contradictions prevalent in the socio-economic and political spaces act as catalysts in the novel. The novelist wants us to remember that we are not separate from the others. Everyone is marginalised in his or her space in some way or the other.

The novel is replete with complexities and the characters are often intertwined within the complexities and ambiguities of their own existence. To cite an example, Supratik does not hesitate to accuse their family servant Madan although the former claims to be a supporter of the marginalised people. "Could he not have engineered the theft in such a way that his pishi, Chhaya, was suspected for the deed? Was it to make the theft believable to the police that he had framed Madan-da, or was it because it had cost less to betray a servant than one's own kind (Mukherjee 477-78)?" Thus, it can be found that Supratik is himself confused at times and the influence of his socio-cultural upbringing at times takes a toll on his beliefs and perceptions. The novelist problematises the complexities arising out of class binaries and investigates into the different layers that lie underneath the fissures of class domination and hegemony.

In the novel *The Lives of Others*, the use of imagery is significant. The novelist uses the image of the sickle or the *tangi* with a double coated meaning. Nitai Das uses his sickle to kill his wife and son before killing himself with the same weapon. Similarly, the Naxalites use the sickle to kill ruthless landowners, police officers and the class enemies. Thus, the sickle is a double-edged weapon that have been used against oneself and also, used to punish others. Even in the second epilogue, the image of the machete recurs when Sabita Kumari remembers the weapon that was used to behead her sixteen year old sister. She was punished for taking part in land opposition. All these incidents highlight how the Naxalite movement was complex and lacked clear goals. There was blood shedding right from the beginning. The movement was driven by high ideals and yet, there was moral vacuity. The leaders, who led the movement themselves, could not comprehend fully the realities surrounding the grass root level workers. *The Lives of Others* tries to record these moral ambiguities and gaps that were there in the Naxalite movement. Although the novelist Neel Mukherjee desists from making a judgment until the end of the novel when we find the mention of a certain Naxal leader by the name of Supratik who is remembered by the Naxal cadres. The name Supratik is changed into Pratik. This is significant because 'su' in Bengali refers to good. So, only the pratik or the symbol remains. This implies that the novelist refuses to attach anything good to the Naxalite revolution. The memory of the movement is a neutral one and leaves it to the readers to pass a judgment. However, the novel does raise certain uncomfortable questions. Nandini Lal comments,

Supratik studies steel plates on railway tracks in an early scene,

ominously foreshadowing the epilogue, set in 2012, where Maoist radicals sabotage tracks seconds before a doomed train approaches. They have heard that this technique was the ‘bequest’ of a certain Supratik from the ’70s, a famous Naxalite martyr. In a novel in which the Ghoshes spend most of their time squabbling over the balance of power and inheritance, it's this bloody, derailed legacy of the once-idealistic activist that bears thinking about. (Lal 516)

The novel can thus be said to be a comment on contemporary times that focuses on the people involved in it and how they were transformed because of the effects of the Naxalite movement.

Coming to a comparative analysis of the selected novels, it can be seen how the authorial stance has differed in each of the six novels. Mahasweta Devi is more intent to highlight the transformation that has been brought upon Sujata in *Mother of 1084*. Devi highlights the cultural alienation of Brati. Through his positioning within the social space, the novelist lays bare the falsities that mark the contemporary age depicted in the said novel. On the other hand, Arundhati Roy exposes the patriarchy. Much like Mahasweta Devi, Roy highlights how the patriarchal setup affects the lives of characters like Ammu. *The God of Small Things* exposes the social hypocrisies that marginalise characters such as Velutha. Both *Mother of 1084* and *The God of Small Things* are social chronicles that focus on the ills of the society. *Magic Seeds* highlights the corruption among the ranks of the revolutionaries. Willie Chandran, although undergoes transformation, shows how the

revolutionaries become agents of exploitation themselves. We find a similar comparative framework in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*. Both *The Inheritance of Loss* and *The Lowland* expose how the revolutionaries turn into thugs and robbers. The youths who had robbed the retired judge's house in Kiran Desai's novel lacked ideal and were interested only in guns. Udayan in *The Lowland* had killed an unarmed police officer and knew that he had done something gravely unjust. In *The Lives of Others*, Supratik leaves behind a legacy marked by a trail of destruction. Like the counterparts in the other selected novels, Supratik indulges in wrongdoings himself. He influences future revolutionaries in ways to derail a train.

The social spaces denoted in the novels are similar. The presence of a resistance movement is there in all the novels. However, the revolutionaries have been painted by the respective novelists in different shades. It is interesting to note that the protagonists of each individual work have different perceptions of the society and therefore, experiences unique manners of isolation. Therefore, the transformation of Brati, Gyan, Willie or Supratik can be painted in different hues. Furthermore, through the various points of view, the reader is able to analyse the different social spaces spread various times. Looking at the novels and comparing them shows how hegemonic agencies operate differently and cannot be considered as something uniform.

The outcome of the chapter can be described as follows. The transformation that the characters undergo is not a linear one. Instead, we find that the characters have evolved and undergone changes according to the changing circumstances. Their

perceptions change and through these mutations, an overview of the social scenario comes to the fore. We find that the portrayed characters are prone to transformation. The metamorphosis is brought about by external factors such as a resistance movement or by internal factors such as marriage, love, or a filial relationship. All six novelists have been successful in highlighting the layered nuances of the characters along with their shades of grey. It has to be understood that the chosen novels imbibe in themselves, a thorough overview of the contemporary periods and the complexities that characterise the respective age. It is also to be noted that the transformation can cause a positive change in the character's life or it can be the other way round. Characters like Sujata and Biju mature while some one like Gauri in *The Lowland* experiences a failed marriage and dejection in her personal life. Furthermore, the outcome of the chapter also points towards the socio-economic condition of the social space. Gauri's personal life or Supratik's transformation reflects the social challenges and complexities of the contemporary age. After analysing the six novels, it can also be said that the transformation of the characters affects their relationships with other family members. A case in point is Willie who undergoes conflicting emotions after his stint with the rebels. The transformation of characters also has a bearing on future generations. Supratik's life serves as an example for the rebels who wish to derail a passenger train. Therefore, the transformation of a particular character may have future repercussions. Furthermore, the open-endedness of the transformation can have many possibilities. Relationships might change and affiliations might undergo a transformation. Thus, the transformation of a character might have a repercussion on the macro as well as on the micro level. The

process of transformation is a complex one and it invariably points towards the intricate dynamics of hegemony operating within the social space.

Conclusion

In this study, the issues of marginalisation, diasporic crisis, majoritarian perspectives, and cultural hegemony are investigated in detail through the prism of Antonio Gramsci's theory of Cultural Hegemony. The thesis addresses the implications of cultural hegemony on the individuals as depicted in the six selected novels *Mother of 1084*, *The God of Small Things*, *Magic Seeds*, *The Inheritance of Loss*, *The Lowland* and *The Lives of Others*.

During the research, it is found that cultural hegemony is an evolving concept that continues and develops as the plot progresses. Therefore, the hegemonic apparatuses that are at play at the beginning of the plot may not be the same anymore towards the end of the plot. It is also observed that the agencies that opposed the cultural hegemony themselves could not resist the temptation of a cultural hegemonic status when they ousted the previously hegemonic agency. The six selected novels of *Mother of 1084*, *The God of Small Things*, *Magic Seeds*, *The Inheritance of Loss*, *The Lowland* and *The Lives of Others* deal with social and cultural marginalisation, how the characters negotiate the different contours of cultural beliefs and thoughts and how they ultimately survive.

In a country like India that witnessed colonial exploitation, the social space is already filled with people having different affiliations to multifarious cultural codes. Thus, we find a character like Jemubhai Patel who suffers from anglophilia. Similarly, some of the members of the Ayemenem House also emulate English manners and

customs. In *Mother of 1084*, it can be noticed that Brati's father and siblings have a penchant for social prestige and money. Thus, they are reluctant to associate themselves with the Naxal revolutionaries lest that connection affects their social lives. This is significant because it offers a peek into the tendencies of contemporary people. In *Magic Seeds*, a character like Willie Chandran willfully keeps himself away from social realities. He is living in his own dream world. These character portrayals offer an insight into the mental and psychological terrains of the characters.

By studying the first research objective of the thesis, tracing the historical roots and the literary contributions of the selected writers, the thesis analyses how the writers have drawn inspiration from their own social positioning and political beliefs. Their own experiences inspire them to narrate tales of exploitation and cultural alienation. The selected novels depict the concept of marginalisation both at the micro and macro levels. Therefore, it is observed that hegemonic marginalisation happens within the social space as well as the family space. The first chapter of the thesis provides a detailed analysis of the six selected novelists and their respective backgrounds. A writer often writes after getting inspired by his or her social background. Thus, a writer like Mahasweta Devi in her *Mother of 1084*, exposes the state's hypocrisy and the ruthless police department that never hesitated to kill youngsters like Brati. The contemporary Bengali middle-class social space is devoid of any moral substance and the people inhabiting the said social space are more concerned about their reputation and their relationship with the political masters and state apparatchiks. Mahasweta Devi's history of social activism helps her identify the social parameters and conditions that had shaped the Naxalite movement

rocking Bengal in the 1960s and 1970s. Similarly, Arundhati Roy, another activist-writer understands the pulse of caste-ridden Kerala and depicts it in *The God of Small Things*. The social inequality that is rampant in the otherwise progressive state of Kerala is witnessed in the pages of the novel. Novelists such as Kiran Desai and V. S. Naipaul also comprehend the pulse of the Indian common people. Their own historical backgrounds of living in the West and yet, being connected to India, has an impact on their respective psyche. They could never tear themselves away from their Indian connection and so, they have had a love-hate relationship with India. The same is witnessed in their portrayal of characters like Jemubhai Patel, the cook in *The Inheritance of Loss* and Willie Chandran in *Magic Seeds*. The mixed reaction and emotion towards the West as well as towards their country of birth are said to be reflections of the lives of the authors themselves.

Jhumpa Lahiri and Neel Mukherjee, on the other hand, being diasporic writers themselves, understand the pulse of the diasporic individuals. They realise how migration leads to stress and strain in interpersonal relationships. Aggravating the already tense family relationships is the presence of a resistance movement that threatens to disturb the already volatile social space. The authors' own experiences from firsthand records or from narratives from secondary sources help them to draw relatable and convincing characters who are torn apart because of the contemporary Naxalite movement as well as an ever-widening social chasm that refuses to bridge.

By studying Antonio Gramsci's theory of Cultural Hegemony, the second research objective, the thesis finds that hegemonic marginalisation happens in one way or

the other in all the works chosen by the scholar. In *Mother of 1084*, hegemonic marginalisation happens both in the social and family spaces. Brati's family members, other than Sujata, represent the larger social space that is dominated by the hegemonic influences of contemporary state policies. In a novel like *Magic Seeds*, Willie Chandran and his fellow comrades dream of a revolution but while doing so, they end up antagonising the villagers. Ironically, they claim to be supporters of the villagers but they themselves become perpetrators of violence. The revolutionaries commit the same crimes that the state-funded agencies commit against the villagers. Similar plot developments are found in other novels as well. In Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*, Udayan and his Naxalite friends indulge in gruesome killings that are loathsome, to say the least. Their intention to overthrow the state administration by indiscriminate killing of police officers cannot be supported by any sane person. In *The Lives of Others*, a similar pattern can be observed. Supratik Ghosh, the protagonist is a confused individual, and he resorts to mindless violence that can never be supported. During his stint with the revolutionaries, Supratik supports the poor villagers but at the same time, Supratik gets confused because his family background belongs to the bourgeoisie. Thus, he is stuck in an in-between self that is neither completely aligned with the poor peasants nor can he completely identify himself with his bourgeois family background. The result is an ambiguous feeling that further leads to an ambivalent response towards his commitment to the Naxalite movement. Towards the end of the novel, the novelist points out that the only legacy that Supratik has left for the future batch of comrades is destruction. Thus, the impending derailment of the express train has a double meaning. It refers to the literal derailment of

a train full of passengers that will invariably cause a massive loss of lives. The hegemonic condition that Supratik and his comrades are fighting against, remains, albeit in a different form. The textual analysis of *The Lives of Others* points to a metaphorical indication of the derailment of the movement.

Other instances of hegemony are observed as well. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, the judge travels to England to escape subordination at the hands of the upper caste Brahmins and the British masters. The judge feels that things in England would be impartial and justice will prevail. But to his astonishment, the young Jemubhai Patel is discriminated against. He is laughed at by the native British people because of his skin colour. Jemubhai is accused of smelling like curry by British girls and as a result, he is obsessed with washing himself. The result of this cultural mishmash gradually causes psychological disturbances within Jemubhai's psyche and he turns into a nervous wreck. The cultural hegemony that Jemubhai wants to escape ironically remains and he willingly becomes a perpetrator of a new kind of cultural hegemony. Thus, from being a victim, he becomes an agency of hegemonic atrocity. He degenerates himself to such a level that he ultimately kills his own wife and passes off the incident as an accident. Even in *The God of Small Things*, it can be observed that Ammu is marginalised because of her love for Velutha. The women folks of Ayemenem House are victims of male patriarchy and chauvinism but they never did justice towards Ammu. Thus, Ammu and Velutha are both marginalised and they ultimately perish because of social subjugation. On the other hand, Chacko continues to violate women workers of his factory and his mother turns a blind eye to his misdeeds. Perhaps the only exception is *Mother of 1084* where Brati, the

protagonist fights till the end against the exploitative and morally depraved middle class. Brati never loses his clarity and in fact, he is the one who helps his mother identify the pretensions and the hypocrisies that his family imbibes. After Brati's death, Sujata embarks on a journey of self-realisation that soon helps her to become familiar with a new enlightenment. The hegemonic agency in *Mother of 1084* remains the same. In that way, it can be said that the plot of *Mother of 1084* is linear because there is no reversal of the agencies of cultural hegemony. Therefore, after analysing all six selected novels, it is inferred that cultural hegemony is something that is not static. The textual analysis of all the novels in this study, through the lens of Antonio Gramsci's theory of Cultural Hegemony, substantiates the fact that cultural hegemony changes and it often happens that people who oppose it end up becoming the perpetrators of hegemonic atrocity themselves. The majoritarian perspective of cultural hegemony has always been a contentious topic and it cannot be said with certainty that the perspective will remain the same even after a certain lapse of time. As already discussed, the definition of majoritarian and the subaltern may change over a course of time. Furthermore, people who wish to overthrow the majoritarian regime may get used to certain alternate hegemonic space that will be similar in character and function in an identical way just like the older hegemonic agency.

By examining the issues of 'The People' and related 'Common Sense', the third research objective, the thesis observes that they are dynamic and cannot be defined within a linear framework. People's experience changes with the change in their surroundings. Thus, at one point of time, they might be at the receiving end of hegemonic exploitation

while at other times, they might be the agents themselves in propagating hegemony. Therefore, the definition of ‘the people’ changes and like most postcolonial novels, the selected six novels end with possibilities, thereby, indicating the fluidity and plurality of cultural hegemony. Similarly, ‘common sense’ that is propagated by the ruling class to make people follow and adhere to the dictatorial policies of the former also undergoes changes. If, by any chance, the hegemonic majority is replaced by another group, the definition of ‘common sense’ changes. To cite an example from *The Inheritance of Loss*, the retired judge faces racial discrimination when he is a student in England. When he returns to India, he tries to implement the same ‘common sense’ of being an anglophile. This affects his personal relationships and eventually, turns him into an unsocial human being.

Through textual analysis of the novels, it is observed that the class that was once identified as subaltern, may try to implement the policies and emulate the ruling pattern of the ruling class and become a hegemonic agency in itself. Udayan in *The Lowland* becomes a cold-blooded murderer and there appears to be no difference between him and the policemen who are part of the repressive state apparatus. Similarly, Supratik in *The Lives of Others* indulges in several acts that cannot be praised. One such act is inspiring his fellow comrades in derailing a train that will most likely, have a catastrophic result.

The ‘Common Sense’ narrative of the majoritarian community ensures that the marginalised characters are exploited because they do not come under the ambit of the majoritarian community. Furthermore, a close analysis of the selected novels brings to

the fore how the struggles of the marginalised community ensure the defeat of the repressive power of the dominant group. The thesis finds that the hegemonic system works in tandem with the tacit support of the repressed group as well. Thus, in the novel *Mother of 1084*, Brati's own family members are supporters of the moral contours that are an offshoot of the pretentious bourgeoisie that forms the dominant group in contemporary Bengal. While analysing the struggles of the marginalised community, the research focuses on the social ills plaguing the contemporary social space. The moral and emotional trajectories of the common people are to be analysed because, without them, it is impossible to investigate the struggles of the marginalised community. In *The God of Small Things*, the thesis finds that caste divisions are rampant. The social space represented in the novel is a part of the wider demographic picture of India. Therefore, it can be seen how caste-based discrimination is projected as normative behaviour. The outcome of such discrimination is dangerous, and the novel shows how the lives of characters are ruined. In *Magic Seeds*, Willie Chandran experiences such 'common sense' normative behaviour when he encounters the band of confused revolutionaries. The revolutionaries consider the villagers as belonging to a lower rank of society. Thus, they always demean and demonise the villagers. The form of hegemony that they practise is equally objectionable and unjust.

The marginalised community and the majoritarian group are part of the same social space and so, it is imperative that during the process of investigating the marginalisation of one community, the majoritarian part of the social space is to be considered and scrutinised. Thus, the present thesis analyses the contemporary social

spaces as reflected in the selected six novels.

By analysing the struggle of the marginalised community to defeat the repressive power of the dominant group, which is the fourth research objective, the thesis observes that the repressive group always aims at dictating a hegemonic code that is often passed off as ‘common sense’. The thesis analyses the factors that influence the dominant group to try and marginalise a particular community. The factors are complex and therefore, a detailed textual analysis and interpretation have been conducted to analyse the findings.

The thesis further observes that the state is often a tacit supporter of the hegemonic agencies. In *Mother of 1084*, it can be seen how the state uses its police force to kill youngsters like Brati. The hegemony that is supported by the state percolates down to micro units like families, etc. Similarly, in *Magic Seeds*, the hegemonic agencies of the state are ultimately replaced by the revolutionaries who themselves are exploitative in nature. In novels like *The Lowland* and *The Lives of Others*, the thesis finds that the members of the resistance movement themselves are confused and they allegedly kill members of the security agencies as well as civilians. The struggle of the marginalised community can be observed in another form in *The God of Small Things*. Ammu and Velutha face marginalisation of different kinds. One is accused of adultery, which is a forbidden territory, especially for a woman. On the other hand, Velutha is accused of transgressing his social limit. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, one of the characters who is marginalised himself becomes the agency of marginalisation. The retired judge becomes an anglophile and practises customs and rituals that are anything but Indian. His food

habits too indicate that way. His fascination for various kinds of pudding is an example. His preference to appoint the cook is based on the criterion that the cook can prepare different varieties of pudding. His choice of dog, an Irish setter is also unique. This breed is rarely found in India.

The first chapter of the thesis discusses the first objective. The chapter titled 'Making of the Writers' extensively dwells on the social backgrounds of the select writers. The chapter examines how the respective social backgrounds of the novelists motivate them to investigate a certain social space that is marred by social and political disturbances. Furthermore, the chapter examines the different authorial stances that are evident in the selected novels.

The third chapter titled 'Cultural Hegemony' analyses the theoretical framework of Antonio Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony that has been adopted by the scholar. It is to be noted that the chapters of the thesis, namely, 'Making of the Writers' and 'Cultural Hegemony' provide an account of the historical developments in the literature and social space that led to the current topic of research.

The third chapter interprets the second objective of the thesis. All the selected works are analysed and the findings include how the novels can be read within the ambit of the theoretical framework. Furthermore, the chapter examines the Postcolonial characteristic features of multiplicity of cultures, hybridity and the struggles of an individual trying to negotiate through alien cultural spaces and terrains. Multiple affiliations to various cultural planes have shaped the perception of the characters who

have accordingly tried to negotiate through the cultural hegemonic spaces according to their respective social position and circumstances. The outcome of the chapter covers the historical context of cultural hegemony and how it is present throughout the respective plots as an undercurrent. In fact, the lives of the characters are intertwined with the flow of cultural hegemony and their outlook and perceptions of lives change because of the omnipresent cultural hegemony. Cultural hegemony is an ever-evolving entity that constantly changes over time. The changing dynamics of power politics and the ever-present agencies of repression continue and at times, it even takes into its fold the individuals who had once protested the same cultural hegemony.

The second, fourth and fifth chapters of the thesis, namely ‘Base and Superstructure’, ‘Cultural Alienation’ and ‘Transformation of Self’ respectively are contributive chapters. They address the third and fourth research objectives.

The discussion in the second chapter ultimately leads to the third chapter of the thesis titled: ‘Cultural Hegemony’. Since chronologically, Marxism came before Gramsci’s Cultural Hegemony, it is imperative to discuss first the Marxian concept of Base and Superstructure and then, proceed towards Cultural Hegemony.

The contributive chapters explore how the characters are positioned within the various social strata. The process of alienation that the marginalised characters face because of the hegemony practised by the majoritarian community, has been examined in the fourth chapter while the fifth chapter traces the transformation that has taken place in the characters.

The forces of production that are at play in the novels result in the advancement of the plot. Furthermore, the social milieu presented in the novels represents the cultural activities that the characters participate in. These cultural activities form part of the Superstructure whereas the Base refers to the production forces that give birth to the different aspects of culture. The chapter titled 'Base and Superstructure' prepares the ground for a thorough analysis of the characters and their emotional contours that undergo different experiences while being positioned within various socio-political contexts. The different socio-political and identity movements that form a background to the narrative also catalyse the happenings in the plot.

The discussion in the second chapter leads on to the third chapter titled 'Cultural Hegemony' where the characters are victims of the hegemonic forces. They become culturally alienated. The theme of cultural alienation has been discussed in the fourth chapter titled 'Cultural Alienation'. The outcome of this chapter indicates that the characters of the selected novels suffer from cultural alienation owing to multiple reasons. Ideological differences arising out of different perceptions towards the existing cultural hegemony puts the characters at various stages of social positioning. As a result of that, characters such as Ammu, Brati, Biju, Gauri, Supratik and Willie Chandran find themselves in positions that are isolated from the mainstream. They suffer at the hands of the agencies that carry forward the mantle of cultural hegemony. This alienation is important because it causes immense pain in the psyche of the characters and the trauma caused in the mind of the characters forces them to look at life in an altogether new fashion. They forge new relationships and their definition of family changes.

In the fifth chapter titled ‘Transformation of Self’, the outcome of the cultural alienation of the characters causes a transformation in the selves of the characters. They somehow change their outlook during the plot and new possibilities arise towards the end of the respective novels. The outcome of the chapter points towards an open-endedness that is characteristic in most Postmodern novels. The transformation in the characters is again significant because their response towards the hegemonic state evolves and there are new indications at the end of the novel that point towards a change in guard in the agencies that administer the cultural hegemony. Through textual analysis, it is found that the agencies of hegemony change and so, it is a possibility that the reader may have to change his or her perceptions towards the actions initiated by the majoritarian community.

The findings of the research include the different facets that relate to the social plane. The factors leading to the migration of the characters is one such example. The urge to gain upward mobility is a result of the desire to escape persecution at the hands of the majoritarian community. Furthermore, the desire to escape a politically volatile space is also there. The reason why Subhash migrates to the US is partly because Calcutta was rocked by violent protests instigated by the Naxal cadres. However, reverse migration is also noticed. Biju in *The Inheritance of Loss* decides to leave the US and return to Kalimpong because he had heard that the Darjeeling district was affected, thanks to the Gorkhaland insurgency. Willie Chandran, in *Magic Seeds*, felt that the revolution happening in South India would give him a sense of purpose. Therefore, the factors leading to the migration of the characters are complex and the present research proves

that possibilities are present which offer opportunities for parallel and future research as well.

The migrations taking place have a bearing on family relationships as well. The interpersonal relationships suffer because of the presence of the Gorkhaland and Naxalite insurgency. The interpersonal relationships among the characters undergo tremendous upheaval and constantly change during the respective plots. Inter-generational differences crop up. Such inter-generational differences can be noticed in *The Lives of Others* and *The Lowland*. Relationships also acquire new meanings throughout the plots. Sujata finds a new meaning in life. She understands Brati's ideology and gradually comes out of her cocooned self. She realises how her husband and most of the other family members live a life of hypocrisy and debauchery. Towards the end of *The Inheritance of Loss*, Biju returns to Kalimpong so that he can reunite with his father. During his return journey, he is robbed of the material possessions that he had bought from the US. Thus, the novel reasserts the triumph of filial relations. The novel also ends with certain positive possibilities. There is a distinct possibility that Sai and Gyan's love affair might be rekindled. Thus, the Gorkhaland insurgency possibly has a positive impact on the characters. Kiran Desai might be suggesting that human love is the only answer to political disturbances happening around us.

When Biju is robbed by the Gorkhaland insurgents, it must be noted that a poor man is robbed by people who identify themselves as marginalised. Therefore, one repressed group is pitted against another repressed individual. This proves that cultural

hegemony is not a simple concept that can be defined as a mere class struggle. Different layers of cultural codes and ethnicity also come to the fore and that again, demands full-fledged research. By drawing the character of Biju as someone who has been robbed, the novelist wants to show that material possessions should not be given much importance.

The beauty of human relationships has perhaps been stressed by all the novelists. Thus, in *Mother of 1084*, the relationship between a mother and her now-dead son becomes so poignant that the mother gets thoroughly influenced by her son's ideologies. Their relationship is even more strengthened because of Brati's thoughts but the irony is that Brati is not a living human being anymore. In *The God of Small Things*, the relationship between Ammu and her two kids also points towards a poignant human relationship. Through the portrayal of this relationship, Arundhati Roy successfully shows how Ammu is persecuted simply because she is a woman and wants to exercise her own free will. Thus, it can be said that one strand leads to another, and the present research wants to point towards the interconnected dots that line the literary social spheres of the selected novels. The undulating contours of human relationships is also found in the other novels. Sai and Gyan's love hate relationship, the judge's reminiscences, the cook's affection for his son who is struggling to make ends meet in a faraway country, Gauri's fondness for her daughter who was born and raised in the US are all examples of human emotions. Yet, some of these human emotions are never reciprocated because the social background and the positioning of the characters are different. Gyan's social prism can never match with Sai's because the former is an ethnic Nepali. Similarly, Gauri's daughter Bela is psychologically very different from her

mother because Bela is born and brought up in America. Thus, she enjoys the free-spirited nature of that country. It is obvious that there is a fundamental intergenerational difference between the two.

The social relevance of the thesis is multifarious. The thesis expands the knowledge and comprehension of human cultures. By defining the different aspects of hegemony, the thesis has addressed the factors that go into the creation of a majoritarian community. Furthermore, the discussion leads to the workings of the marginalised class and how the class struggles to sustain itself amidst the hostile hegemonic space. The thesis opens further discussions that will analyse how in today's age of globalisation, the conflict of cultures can lead to fissures and rifts within various social spaces. The dynamics of relationships also change. The thesis throws light on how policies of inclusion can be worked out by governments and other social entities.

Since the thesis discusses novels that had resistance or identity movements as a backdrop to the plot, the findings of the research will encourage policymakers to adopt a more humane approach towards protest movements that happen frequently in different parts of India. It must be seen and analysed with care how the lives of individuals are intricately associated with protest movements that have been common occurrences in India in the past few decades.

The present study suggests that there are possibilities arising out of the presence of cultural hegemony at every stage in life, be it on a micro-unit, such as family, or a macro level, such as nation space. Human relationships are subject to the changing nature

of hegemony, and one must be prepared to analyse the multifarious factors responsible for the fluidity of modern life that is often dictated by an equally volatile political system ruled by hegemonic powers and the majoritarian community. Hegemony can have a disastrous impact on individuals. The thesis plays a significant role in highlighting how cultural hegemony has an impact on the marginalisation of characters who are caught within the vortex of social, political, or cultural alienation. The present study opens further space for research and discussion for scholars who are keen to examine issues of cultural isolation, diaspora and different facets of cultural hegemony. This study indicates that family, interpersonal relationships can play a significant role in alleviating the emotional crisis that someone living on the margins faces. The protagonists of the selected novels have strong ties with some of their immediate family members and it is this family space that ultimately provides succour to them. Literature is a mirror of life and the novels of Mahasweta Devi, Arundhati Roy, V.S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri and Neel Mukherjee emphasise the need for social transformation and equality. A society can progress only if everyone is treated with respect and provided with equal opportunities that will enable them to live a decent and respectful life. It is high time that policymakers and state leaders allow multiplicity of voices and ensure that someone not agreeing with the narratives of the majoritarian community also has a right to live and contribute towards the betterment of the society. The leaders of the society must seriously think about the plight of the marginalised people and try to achieve an egalitarian society that provides a safe place for everyone irrespective of caste, creed, gender, political beliefs, or social positioning.

In today's world which is marked by dissent and strife, it is very important to understand and appreciate the plurality of thoughts and perceptions. The thesis addresses how hegemonising and patronising binaries can be dangerous. The findings of the thesis will help to build an egalitarian society and foster democratic citizenship for all. A humanistic approach is the need of the hour, and the thesis will encourage the government and social agencies to adopt a more people-oriented outlook.

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