NARRATING THE NEW INDIA: GLOBALIZATION AND MARGINALITY IN POST-MILLENNIUM INDIAN ANGLOPHONE NOVELS

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by
Swaralipi Nandi

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Dissertation written by

Swaralipi Nandi

B.A., University of Burdwan, 2002
M.A., University of Hyderabad, 2004
M.Phil, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2006
Ph.D., Kent State University, 2012

Approved by

Babar M’Baye Co-Chair, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Masood A Raja Co-Chair, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Tammy Clewell Member, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Judy Wakabayashi Member, Doctoral Dissertation Committee

Accepted by

Robert W. Trogdon Chair, Department of English
John R.D. Stalvey Dean, College of Arts and Sciences*
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INTRODUCTION:

Globalization and Indian Literature

“I’ve been asking colleagues in several departments and disciplines whether they’ve ever come across the term “neoliberalism” and whether they know what it means. A small number acknowledged having heard the word; a very much smaller number ventured a tentative definition. I was asking because I had been reading essays in which the adjective *neoliberal* was routinely invoked as an accusation, and I had only a sketchy notion of what was intended by it…I thought I’d better learn more.”

--Stanley Fish, “Neoliberalism and Higher Education”

In his article “Neoliberalism and Higher Education,” Stanley Fish expresses his bewilderment with the term ‘neoliberalism’ that he seems to have come across quite frequently in many recent publications. Fish’s puzzlement with the term reveals two very important facts about literary studies today. Firstly, the term ‘neoliberalism’ has become a significant theoretical concept in academics, especially in social sciences and globalization studies, to discuss the social, political and cultural developments of our times. Secondly, this is still a relatively new term in the field of literary studies applied to interpret the literatures of a post-globalized world. ‘Neoliberalism’ is a political and economic philosophy specifically associated with the processes of economic
liberalization and globalization of the free market, which constitutes the reality of our contemporary world. Since the concept is more appropriate in interpreting the political and economic policies of the participating globalizing nations, the use of the term in literary studies might raise pertinent questions as to how do we integrate ‘neoliberalism,’ as a socio-political-economic philosophy, into the analysis of literary and cultural texts? How can the field of postcolonial literary analysis be revised through an engagement with the materialist aspects of globalization and interdisciplinary interventions? This dissertation seeks to answer some of these questions through a reading of selected Anglophone novels of post-liberalization India, which are also representative of the new trends in postcolonial literature.¹ The novels I read closely in this project are novels that depict the local realities of a new, changing, and globalized India that is in the process of metamorphosing itself under the forces of economic globalization.

Attempting to study the new literatures of India, this dissertation aims to pursue three primary objectives:

i) To analyze the novels’ representation of the new modes of neoliberal subjectivity and citizenship in post-liberalized India

ii) To study the new socio-economic settings of the novels that reflect the structural changes taking place in India after liberalization

¹ I use the term ‘post-liberalization’ to denote the specific period of Indian history after major economic changes towards free trade, increased foreign investment, open markets and neoliberalism were implemented in 1991 by the then Finance minister Manmohan Singh. These economic policies officially marked the transition of India’s economic and political system from a proto-socialist model conceptualized by Nehru, to a model that more prominently leans towards many capitalistic policies, if not a complete conversion to capitalism.
iii) To analyze the representation of the underclass in the novels and theorize on the perception of marginality in post-liberalized India

Through the above objectives, this project contributes to the recent developments in postcolonial studies regarding the concept of globalization. As the late twentieth century globalization becomes an important theoretical notion in postcolonial studies—whereby ‘globalization’ has been included in the list of core postcolonial concepts by the pioneers of postcolonial theory, Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin, in their recent *Postcolonial Studies Reader*—it is imperative that we understand the new changes in the postcolonial nations of the global South through the specific lens of economic globalization. To explore the central debates of globalization, this dissertation looks at novels on a variety of themes on current Indian realities, especially focusing on how the material and ideological aspects of economic globalization affect the marginal subjects within the nation. I study novels, like *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga and *Q&A* by Vikas Swarup, that portray protagonists from the socio-economically marginalized sections, who rise up to immense financial success in the new India, proclaiming globalization as an emancipatory power. Contrarily, the other novels I focus on, like *The Story of My Assassins* by Tarun Tejpal and *Sacred Games* by Vikram Chandra, tell stories of protagonists from the underbelly of the neoliberal city; and their consequent dispossession and criminalization in the process of current urbanization. Finally, the third group of novels that I study, namely Indra Sinha’s *Animal’s People* and Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*, brings up the crucial

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2 Almost a substitute to the term “Third World”, which has now become obsolete and politically incorrect, the term “global South” refers to the developing and underdeveloped countries of the world, most of which are erstwhile colonies, and are incidentally located in the Southern hemisphere of the globe.
debates about environment in the context of globalization, and depict how global forces affect the local people and the Indian environment. In a nutshell, this dissertation attempts to analyze the conventional postcolonial issues of power and marginality but in the context of a contemporary world reshaped by the forces of global capitalism.

To understand the ‘new’ Indian fiction on globalization it is important to look at some of the major characteristics of the contemporary Indian novels that are distinctively different from the earlier postcolonial novels, which are commonly associated with the canonical Indian fictions of pre-Rushdie novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, R. K Narayan, Raja Rao, Kamala Markhandya, Rushdie, and the post-Rushdie writers like Sashi Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Arundhati Roy and Amitav Ghosh. The new Indian novel marks a distinct change of trend from the earlier ones. In an article on the Frankfurt Book Fair of 2006, Sonia Phalnikar asserts that “as India takes center stage at the Frankfurt Book Fair, it's not the Salman Rushdies, Arundhati Roys and Vikram Seths, but a new generation of authors writing in English who are making waves. The article goes on to describe how several European and American publishers agreed that India was “the flavor of the season,” a nation whose literary popularity derives not so much from the prominence of the famous Indian English novelists already raging the global book markets, but more from the growing interest in India as an emerging economic power.

This is certainly a movement beyond the Pre-Rushdie fiction, Rushdie’s novels and the works of the post-Rushdie generation of writers who mainly wrote about colonialism, partition, the newly emerging postcolonial nation state, the issues of national identity and the atrocities of the Emergency period. In contrast to those earlier novels, the
contemporary Indian novel in English has now moved to capture the new tremors caused by the overwhelming influx of the global capital and policies of free trade after 1991, which are restructuring every aspect of the Indian life with increasing intensity. As Phalnikar’s article asserts, the new literature of India is “an acknowledgement of the country's growing economic clout and its embrace of global capitalism -- a fact that has also caused upheaval in its chaotic cities and social fabric.” Consequently, the changing social conditions of India have also led to a significant transformation in the aesthetic representation of India in the Indian novels, whereby the new Indian novels diverge from Rushdie and Roy in the latter’s inclination to project Orientalist images of Indian exoticism.³ The article cites Peter Ripkin, head of the Frankfurt-based “Society for the Promotion of African, Asian and Latin American Literature”, who observes that the recent Indian works in English strongly depart from the earlier novels that present a “stereotypical image of oriental wisdom” as well as differ from the novels of social critique and rural themes that characterized the work of earlier Indian Anglophone writers such as Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan in the 1970s and ’80s”.

In this context, Rana Dasgupta’s article titled “A New Bend in the River” provides an excellent discussion of the recent Indian writing in English. Dasgupta’s article attempts a detailed study of the new direction Indian writing in English has taken over the past few years. Asserting that the new Indian novel no longer hinges on narratives of “family sagas” or “the colourful celebrations of Indian language and

³ For a critique of Indian postcolonial novels catering to Orientalist images of India, see Graham Huggan The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margin, Sadia Toor, Padmini Mongia “The Postcolonial Indo-Chic”
sentiment,” Dasgupta observes the emergence of the metropolitan novel that focuses on the dynamics of urban existence in a contemporary post-globalized India. Taking the examples of Vikas Swarup’s Q&A, Aravind Adiga’s The White Tiger, Mridula Koshy's If It Is Sweet and Palash Krishna Mehrotra's Eunuch Park, Dasgupta observes that the new Indian novel captures the complex economic, cultural and political changes happening in post-liberalization India and the various characters grappling with those tumultuous changes. In all, Dasgupta argues, it brings out a bleak picture of reality asserting that Indian novels from the last five years have become increasingly dark and cynical. Most of the novels portray lives lived on the edge amidst exploitation and violence, and people struggling for their survival. Dasgupta finds such a dark world as morally abysmal too: “There is not even any room for moral judgment because the world is so sick - and its protagonists, spiritually lost, have no comment on the terrifying reality they discover. Respite and tenderness are found rarely and usually, as in Koshy's and Mehrotra's collections, in uncanny, provisional relationships.” In the penultimate para of his article, Dasgupta goes on to proclaim that “these writers are not particularly concerned anymore by their country's colonized past: they are preoccupied instead by its expanding, imperial future, and they are looking to find meaning and direction for the whole careening, tormented joyride” (“A New Bend in the River”). The emergence of the new Indian novel is thus a metonymy for the emerging new India itself, which has claimed significant attention in the global political-economic arena as one of the fastest growing economies in the recent years. The Indian novel no longer portrays the social world of
Narayan and Rushdie precisely because the Indian reality has changed drastically over the decade.

Though widely varied in their themes and contents, the ‘new’ novels of India, or what I term as the post-millennium novels, still share some basic features. Firstly, these novels are what Paul Jay calls as the “post-postcolonial writing” (borrowing the term from Mohsin Hamid) ---- texts that are “in many ways demonstratably different from what we might call the classic postcolonial texts, for, while they allude in some way to the legacy of colonialism, they pay more attention to the effects of contemporary globalization than they do to the imperatives of postcolonial state making” (96). While some of the texts I study here, like The Hungry Tide by Amitav Ghosh, depict globalization as an ongoing process of colonialism, these novels no longer focus on colonialism and the Emergency as central historical points for their narratives, hence breaking the long trajectory of post-Rushdie novels.4

Comprising of a whole generation of late twentieth century Indian writers—including Rushdie and others who have been recognized as stalwart figures of Indian fiction in English—the post-Rushdie group of writers have mostly highlighted on the Emergency period under Indira Gandhi (1975-77) as the pivotal point in their novels.

4 The Emergency of India is a period of 21 months, between 26th June 1975 to 21st March 1977, when the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, declared a state emergency under article 352 of the Indian Constitution that allowed the Prime Minister to assume absolute control over the nation’s governance, and lead to a suspension of elections and civil liberties. Marked as one of the most controversial period of independent India, this period is often criticized for dictatorship, massive crackdown on political opposition, thwarting of fundamental rights, random arrests, and severe censorship of media. Most Indian novelists have opposed the Emergency in their writing.
Thus from *Midnight’s Children* by Rushdie to *The Great Indian Novel* by Shashi Tharoor, from Rohinton Mistry’s *A Fine Balance* to Nayantara Sehgal’s *Rich Like Us*, from Manohar Malgaonkar’s *The Garden Keepers* to O.V. Vijayan’s *The Saga of Dharmapuri*, Indian novels in the 1980s-90s—which included some of the most well known works of Indian Anglophone fiction—were predominantly narratives set in the context of the Emergency. As Pranav Jani points out, the Emergency period and the emergence of the nation state as a repressive, neo-fascist body made the English-novelists dismiss the nation as a “potential site for fulfilling the promises of decolonization” (7). This consequently led to a moment of turning away from the nation to a cosmopolitan and transnational consciousness in Indian novels. Thus a critique of the nation state, which constitutes one of the most important thematic motifs of the postcolonial Indian novel, is often inspired by and is encapsulated in the moment of the Emergency. Jani argues that the later novels that offer a resistive narrative to the various repressive mechanisms of the contemporary nation states, even in the context of neoliberalism, exemplify a continuing trajectory of the post-Emergency turn in Indian writing: “the ongoing inequalities in postcolonial India since then, brought about by the neoliberal strategies of development, communalist politics, and heightened militarism that were engendered in the early 1980s, have only served to deepen the postnational turn among Indian novelists working in English” (7).

However, though Jani reads the contemporary novels as a continuing train of the same genre of post-Rushdie novels, a disjuncture can be seen between the novels of the 1980-90s and the novels that have started to emerge since the turn of the century, year
2000 onwards, that specifically narrate a post-liberalization India and acknowledge the overwhelming presence of the process of globalization. Significantly enough, though the liberalization of India occurred in 1991, it is only after almost a decade that we see the ‘new’ genre of novels emerging, hence my use of the term post-millennium novels. The post-millennium novels—like Transmission by Hari Kunzru, Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai, Q&A by Vikas Swarup, The Hungry Tide by Amitav Ghosh, No God in Sight by Altaf Tyrewala, The White Tiger by Amitav Ghosh, The Templegoers by Atish Tasserportray a metamorphosing India. This is an India grappling with the forces of neoliberal globalization, new notions of identity and citizenship, remapping of the landscapes according to the need of the market, new modes of global capital flow, changing economic structure of the nation, the rapid rise of the middle class and the expansion of the free market, and the free flow of consumer goods and unskilled labors across transnational boundaries. In both their themes and settings, these novels capture the changing dynamics of the late twentieth century.

The ‘new’ Indian novel also shows a change in the way it shifts the spotlight from the struggles and contestations of the middle class or elite characters to highlight the inner lives of the underclass populations. Post-Rushdie Indian novels have long been associated with middle class or diasporic cosmopolitan elitism, whereby some of the canonical names of Indian fiction in English have hailed from what is commonly known as the Stephenian group of novelists—referring to the ‘elite’ group of writers like Amitav
Ghosh, Sashi Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee and others who had attended Delhi’s privileged institution of St. Stephen’s College. Consequently, the various aspects of postcolonial condition in literature—questions of nationhood, hybridity, migration, violence of the nation state—were more often than not mediated through the elite, often diasporic, cosmopolitan narrator. Thus as characters like Chatterjee’s elite bureaucrat Agastya, Ghosh’s intellectual diasporic characters like Tridib and Antar, Mistry’s middle class clerk Gustad, Arun Joshi’s disgruntled diasporic Sindi Oberoi, Adarsh Vakil’s carefree ‘beachboy’ Cyrus and Arundhati Roy’s melancholic Esther—hailing from a rich and upper caste Syrian Christian family—dominated the literary scene with the particular angst of their privileged, yet tormented existence. The Indian novel in English, as Leela Gandhi points out, “tends to imagine the nation as and through the middle-classes and their sensibilities”. Thus Gandhi asserts:

The interesting-ness of the middle-classes is, of course, historically and culturally variable. So also, the Indian babu has changed considerably over time to become, over the last couple of decades, more and more mobile, affluent, globalised, metropolitan etcetera. Inevitably, he now wants this self image to be consolidated and confirmed in the novels he reads and sometimes writes. It could be said, a la Anderson, that he wants and is able to fictively imagine the nation as the embodiment of his aspirations.

Marking a shift from this middle class world view, the tensions and praxis of the new India in literature are mediated through fictional characters from the marginalities of society. As Rana Dasgupta aptly puts it, the English-speaking middle class characters
“are no longer in possession of Indian truth. They may still be the protagonists, but events must force them out of their orbits if they are to discover anything real - for reality is produced by other groups and classes”. Instead, it is the underclass characters who take the center stage in the fictions, not only because the volatile social conditions of the 21st century India consist of unfamiliar and new complexities that can no longer be contained in an elite-centric fictional world, but also because the arguments for both neoliberal globalization and anti-globalization justify themselves through their emancipatory effect on the marginal communities. Consequently, the figure of the marginal becomes an important subject both in the narratives that glorify the neoliberal ideology, as well as in fictions that critique and resist globalization. This dissertation primarily focuses on the representation of the poor and marginalized groups in the fictions that signify the way neoliberal globalization affects the lowest margins of society—both in terms of the way the figure of the marginal subject is co-opted in the rhetoric of neoliberal success, as well as the way an emphatic critique of globalization is portrayed through the victimization of the marginal.

Being aware of the polysemic nature of the terms ‘marginal’ and ‘marginality’, I have used the words specifically to denote the socio-economically deprived, underprivileged and poverty ridden groups of society. I find Moni Nag’s definition of marginality most apt for my project, whereby I denote marginality in the sense of exclusion from both ‘receptive’ and ‘active’ participation as Nag describes the terms: ‘Marginality is meant in a double sense—1. as a lack of receptive participation of goods and services (society is here conceived as a seat of social resources and benefits; and 2. as a lack of active
participation in the decision making process” (226). Subsequently, I use the term ‘marginal’ to signify the lower fringes of society in terms of class, caste and indigeneity, geopolitical location, and in terms of exclusion of certain groups from access to economic resources and political power. The novels in this study reveal a variety of representations of the socio-economically marginalized characters, which embody some of the central debates of contemporary globalization.

To gloss over some of the important theoretical terms that form the crux of the discussions in this project, ‘globalization’ is one of the most complex terms to define. Primary among its definitional problems is its occurrence over multiple historical phases, for ‘globalization’ per se is a centuries old process that can be traced from the geopolitical expansion of the Greek and Roman empires to the 19th century exploits of European colonialism that embraced almost the whole world. Globalization can also refer to various forms of transnational movements, ranging from a movement of goods, culture, capital, people, and even ideas and information. However, the concept of globalization in this dissertation refers to the specific historical period of economic liberalization that has started in late 20th century. I reiterate what Susan George asserts regarding the term globalization: “Let us first make clear that the word ‘globalisation’ on its own is virtually meaningless. Like its precursor, the word "development", it needs an adjective to escape from a convenient conceptual fuzziness. The adjective used here will be ‘neo-liberal’. This means that ‘globalisation’ is another name for late-twentieth/twenty-first century capitalism, qualitatively different from previous incarnation.” The age of contemporary globalization, also known as neoliberal
globalization, thus can be said to have roughly begun around the 1978-80 when several nations adopted new monetary policy of free market and open trade. David Harvey draws a comprehensive timeline for the emergence of the worldwide socio-economic changes, focusing on some of the major “epicenters” of this turning point—Deng Xiaoping’s liberalization of a communist-ruled economy in China in 1978; Margaret Thatcher’s economic policies for Britain in 1979 that curbed trade union power and promoted privatization, free trade and less regulations on businesses; and Ronald Reagan’s economic reforms for United States in the 1980s that promoted “policies to curb the power of labour, deregulate industry, agriculture, and resource extraction, and liberate the powers of finance both internally and on the world stage” (Harvey 1).

If Thatcherism and Reaganism represented particularly aggressive programs of neoliberal restructuring in the geopolitical locales of USA and Britain during the 1980s, more moderate forms of neoliberal politics was propagated all over the world, including the non-Western peripheries mostly through the efforts of USA and other G-7 states. Subsequently, the GATT, NATO, and IMF increasingly globalized neoliberalism and institutionalized the extension of market forces in the global South through structural adjustments and fiscal policies. The immense impact of neoliberal globalization has thus permeated all over the globe. Harvey offers a comprehensive summary of the process:

There has everywhere been an emphatic turn towards neoliberalism in political-economic practices and thinking since the 1970s. Deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision have been too common. Almost all states, from those newly minted after the collapse of the
Soviet Union to old style social democracies and welfare states such as New Zealand and Sweden have embraced neoliberalism…Furthermore the advocates of the neoliberal way now occupy positions of considerable influence in education…in the media, in corporate boardrooms…in key state institutions…and also in those international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) that regulate global finance and trade. Neoliberalism has, in short, become hegemonic as a mode of discourse (3).

India also joined in the bandwagon of economic liberalization in 1991, when the then Finance Minister Manmohan Singh made major changes in the economic policies, transforming the country from a proto-socialist, mixed economy advocated by India’s first Prime Minister Nehru, to a neoliberal economy that allowed more Foreign Direct Investment and lesser regulations on global trade. The move was initiated by India’s economic crisis prior to 1991, which required a bailout from the International Monetary Fund. The IMF in return demanded drastic economic reforms from India which would finally lead the country to join the drive of economic globalization. Rupal Oza charts out the major changes that the liberalization of India ushers in, mainly pertaining to a significant shift from a “socialist growth model to capitalism” (11) to an emergence of

5 Rupal Oza points out that although the process of liberalization was officially implemented in 1991, the changing trends in Indian economy and society had already started by the mid 1980s, especially in Rajiv Gandhi’s 1985 budget that sought to “emulate the tiger economies by creating a new India” (11). Consequently, as Oza asserts, Rajiv Gandhi became the first icon of ‘modern’, neoliberal India (12).
the consumer goods economy. Chief among the changes were a relaxation for the foreign direct investment, a certain “foreign technology fetishism” (Hansen 140) or the aspiration for a sense of modernity through foreign goods and technology, and the spectacular growth of the consumer goods market, whereby “television, scooters, and refrigerators become icons of mobility” (Oza 12). These changes were specifically directed to the advantage of the elite and the upper middle classes who displayed, as Salim Lakha asserts, “an insatiable propensity to consume as a consequence of rising incomes and a greater variety of goods offered through an increased exposure to global forces (251).”  

On the cultural front, advertisements, newspapers, media, TV, films all started generating incessant images and attitudes about the new ‘modern’ middle class lifestyle. The state television network *Doordarshan* was suddenly in company of multiple privatized cable networks and internet was readily available, leading to an unprecedented exchange of information or what Appadurai famously calls as the “global cultural flows” (33). India also saw a significant Information Technology (IT) boom which generated an abundance of highly skilled yet inexpensive middle class labor for the global economy, putting the country right in the middle of the rhetoric of ‘third world growth’ propelled by globalization. The liberalization of India, as several studies show, has thus brought

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6 Oza gives an important reminder that the concept of “middle class” in the context of India is quite ambiguous, since the difference between the lower and the upper middle class is seen “not only in income levels but also in education and access of resources” (12). In the absence of a proper definition, Oza identifies the middle class as consisting of “the petty bourgeoisie of traders, small businessmen, and those in service occupations” (12).
immense changes in India’s socio-economic structure, mainly pertaining to the rapid rise of the middle class, the restructuring of the urban space, increased flow of global commodities in Indian markets, the IT growth, changed governmental policies for the poor and an increasing growth of the private sector according to norms of neoliberalism (Oza; Gupta; Chopra; Scrase and Scarse; Ruparelia and et all).

Thus, the nature of contemporary globalization can be fully understood only through the guiding doctrine behind economic globalization—‘neoliberalism’ and the various policy changes it advocates. Harvey points out that as an economic policy neoliberalism “proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (2). Taking its origin from the root ideology of nineteenth century “liberalism,” which lays utmost importance on the concept of freedom whether be it in civil society or in economic realms, neoliberalism advocates for a freer, more competitive and equally unregulated market. Consequently,

7 The Pro-globalization rhetoric recurrently invokes the benefits of globalization especially for the poor countries or the ‘third world’. For impassioned articulation of this rhetoric see IMF’s Flemming Larsen’s op-ed “Globalization and the Poor Countries”; David Dollar’s “Growth is Good for the Poor”; Jagdish Bhagwati’s In Defense of Globalization (2004)

8 Attempting to explain neoliberalism, Elizabeth Martinez and Arnoldo Garcia aptly traces its roots to classical liberalism: “Neo” means we are talking about a new kind of liberalism. So what was the old kind? The liberal school of economics became famous in Europe when Adam Smith, an Scottish economist, published a book in 1776 called The Wealth Of Nations. He and others advocated the abolition of government intervention in economic matters. No restrictions on manufacturing, no barriers to commerce, no tariffs, he said; free trade was the best way for a nation's economy to develop. Such ideas were "liberal" in the sense of no controls. This application of individualism encouraged "free" enterprise,
the process of globalization and the opening up of national borders became the ideal process through which the ‘free’ flow of capital, goods and labor could be ensured as even the smaller, developing nations, could be hurled in the market. Central to the neoliberal philosophy is the idea of capitalism on a global scale, whereby the contemporary globalization has often been associated with terms like ‘global capitalism or ‘capitalistic globalization’.⁹

While neoliberalism is primarily an economic vision concerning matters of the financial system, propagated by Chicago School economists like Hayek and Milton Friedman, it also exerts immense influence on the political sphere and in the shaping of the government policies. Contrary to the idea of complete non-interference of the state in the market in “liberalism”, neoliberalism rather demands participation of the state, provided it serves as a supporter of the market. As Harvey points out, the role of the state is to create and preserve a framework that favors the market: “The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defences, police and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights, and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets” (2). Thus, instead of demanding the limitation of the state, neoliberalism involves the state as an ally in its goal to implement market principles. Elizabeth Martinez and Arnoldo Garcia’s ‘free’ competition -- which came to mean, free for the capitalists to make huge profits as they wished.”

⁹ William Avilés defines global capitalism or capitalistic globalization as synonymous with economic globalization-- “the accelerating internationalization of capital, technology and spread of capitalist production lines on a global level” (11).
summarization of the main points of neoliberalism shows the immense changes it brings not only in the economic context but also in social and political contexts. For Martinez and Garcia, neoliberalism attempts to impose five main paradigms--

a) “The rule of the market — Liberating ‘free’ enterprise or private enterprise from any bonds imposed by the government (the state) no matter how much social damage this causes”. It also means deunionization of workers and the elimination of worker’s rights to maximize profit

b) Reducing public expenditure for social services, such as health and education, by the government and cutting the safety net for the poor

c) Deregulation, minimizing the government regulation for the sake of profit

d) Privatization of the nation’s seminal infrastructures like water, electricity, banks, hospitals, roads etc that were earlier owned by the state

e) Elimination of the concepts of “public good” or community and substituting it with individual responsibility.

It should however be noted that neoliberalism in India differs to a certain extent from its Western counterpart, mostly in terms of the second point listed by Martinez and Garcia about government aid. As Partha Chatterjee points out, though India has increasingly moved towards adopting neoliberal policies that promote rapid growth of corporate capital, the state has not completely withdrawn the government aids and assistance programs for the poor, precisely because of the electoral politics in India.\textsuperscript{10} The political

\textsuperscript{10} A similar observation is put forward by Akhil Gupta and Aradhana Sharma where their study of two programs for rural women in India lead them to conclude
society in India—consisting of a large number of voters from the rural, poor and underprivileged groups—have constantly expected and demanded a continuation of the government aid policies that had been facilitated for the poor since India’s Independence. Neoliberal changes in India, according to Chatterjee, therefore shows a triumph of the political society that has been successful in negotiating aid from the welfare state, which has also complied to the demands of its electoral population specifically because leaving these marginalised populations without state support would mean running “the risk of turning them into the ‘dangerous classes’ ” (62). The socio-political implication of the government aid for the poor however highly debated. Though many scholars like Chatterjee and, Gupta and Sharma agree that these interactions between the Indian state and its subaltern citizens create an accountability of the government towards its people that can hold the potential for immense political agency for the common, poor man, it still remains to be seen how these welfare programs can be converted into tropes of real political action to subvert the unequal growth under neoliberalism.

The omnipresence of neoliberalism is perhaps its greatest power which, though started as Adam Smith’s economic propositions and their implementation in the economic policies by Thatcher and Reagan, has infiltrated the microcosm of individual human existence in every sphere of life. Therefore, trying to define neoliberalism, W. Larner says that neoliberalism is more than a set of economic policies; it is a form of political-economic governance. “Neo-liberal rationality, while foregrounding the market that “in a postcolonial context with high rates of poverty and a neoliberal economy with high rates of growth, what we witness is not the end of welfare and its replacement with workfare but the simultaneous expansion of both kinds of programs” (277).
is not only, even primarily focused on the economy; rather it involves extending and involving market values to all institutions in social action, even as the market remains a distinctive player” (7). Since it fiercely promotes the growth of the capital, many thinkers see neoliberalism as a mode of unfettered exploitation of one class by the other—and often of one nation by the other—that echoes the tenets of the mercantile economic exploitation of the process of colonialism. Calling neoliberal globalization imperialistic, J.W Smith argues that neoliberalism is only a variant of the earlier mercantilist imperialism, though the two terms create an illusion of difference. Smith asserts that “in reality the same wealth confiscation went on, deeply buried within complex systems of monopolies and unequal trade hiding under the cover of free trade” (126). Therefore for Smith, it all comes down to the question of who has control over the resources and profits of the trade, for global trade has resulted in, as he argues, the “siphoning of the world’s wealth to imperial centers of capital today just as they did when the secret of plunder by trade was learned centuries ago” (126). Thus in term of its methods and objectives many scholars identify neoliberal globalization akin to a new form of colonialism.

Thus, connecting globalization with the history of imperialism, famous postcolonial thinkers like Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin conceptualize globalization as a new form of colonialism, with its imperial center in US instead of Europe. As they assert:

The key to the link between classical imperialism and contemporary globalization in the twentieth century has been the role of United States. Despite its resolute refusal to perceive itself as ‘imperial’…the United States had, in its international
policies, eagerly espoused the political domination and economic and cultural control associated with imperialism…the operation of globalization cannot be separated from the structures of power perpetuated by European imperialism (92). Similarly, identifying economic globalization as a “latest wave of colonialism,” Anna Manzo comments that the multinational corporations of capital rule over the nation states, whereby a country’s national, state and local policies regarding crucial areas like health, taxes, public expenditure, finance and even biotechnology are dictated by the corporations. Moreover, Manzo points out “Supra-national institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, and World Trade Organization are working to further negate national sovereignty through emerging global legal infrastructures… allowing the formation of unprecedented monopolies.” On a similar note, global capitalism has been variously referred to as a synonym or extension of terms likes “neocolonialism” (taking its cue from Che Guevera’s 1965 speech in Algeria 11) and “neo-imperialism” signifying its similarities with the colonial imperialism and its exploitative ways. 12

In a similar vein, Hardt and Negri also define the globalization of capitalist production as the new “Empire”, describing the immense scope of its power (xi). Hardt and Negri emphatically assert the repressive powers of The Empire—“The Empire we are

11 Che Guevara uses the term at “At the Afro-Asian Conference in Algeria” speech to the Second Economic Seminar of Afro-Asian Solidarity in Algers, Algeria on February 24, 1965 asserting: "As long as imperialism exists it will, by definition, exert its domination over other countries. Today that domination is called neocolonialism."

12 Referring to the new spate of actual colonial acquisition of territories by Europe, USA and Japan towards the end of the nineteenth/early 20th century.
faced with wields enormous powers of oppression and destruction” (xv). Yet, unlike Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin’s theorization of the US as the imperial center of globalization, the new “Empire” for Hardt and Negri does not necessarily preclude specific geopolitical, metropolitan centers of power.\(^\text{13}\) Rather, important in their theorization is the concept of Empire as a diffused and amorphous entity—“it is decentered and deterritorialized” (xii) says Hardt and Negri, which echoes the Foucauldian notion of decentralized power, whereby the Empire is much more disseminated beyond the centers of Western power. The Empire is thus ubiquitous—it reaches the remotest corners and spreads to the grass root levels of global existence, affecting the lives of the marginal communities the most.

The contemporary Indian novels analyzed in this project portray the material effects of neoliberal globalization on the lives of the common, underprivileged people in a variety of ways. The fictional representation of globalization in the context of marginal entities can be mapped through three main emerging thematic trends: Firstly, globalization is portrayed as a positive change for the marginal communities in many novels of contemporary India. Manifest through the theme of rags-to riches stories, which emerge as a recurrent plot in a number of current Indian novels, novels that project the positive side of globalization narrate stories of the main protagonists hailing from socio-

\(^{13}\) As Hardt and Negri explicates: “The concept of Empire is characterized fundamentally by a lack of boundaries: Empire’s rule has no limits. First and foremost, then, the concept of Empire posits a regime that effectively encompasses the spatial totality, or really that rules over the entire “civilized” world. No territorial boundaries limit its rule. Second,…From the perspective of Empire, this is the way things will always be and the way they were always meant to be”(xiv).
economically marginalized sections of the Indian society and achieving fascinating financial success, primarily through the new opportunities opened up by liberalization. Novels like *The White Tiger* and *Q&A* tell stories of marginal protagonists Balram Halwai and Ram Mohammad Thomas respectively, both of whom climb the social ladder with immense alacrity. Balram Halwai is born to an impoverished family of a daily wage laborer in a backward, poor village of rural India, while Ram Mohammad is born as an orphan and spends his childhood struggling for his existence, working as a child labor. Significantly, both are able to transcend their inherited impoverished conditions and find miraculous monetary success, specifically through the open economy and the influx of global capital of post-liberalization India. Balram and Ram’s stories of success are thus the testimonies of the success of neoliberal globalization, which is portrayed as an emancipating force for the lowest strata of the Indian society. However, the novels do not portray Balram and Ram’s success as a natural consequence of economic liberalization; rather both the protagonists embody crucial values of ideal neoliberal subjectivity that propel their success. The protagonists thus make it to the top precisely because they play according to the rules of neoliberal capitalism, and act as the model citizens of the new economy. The novels are therefore important ideological manifestos of neoliberal hope, which promises success to all those who imbibe the ideology of neoliberalism in their lives and personalities.

Apart from the tales of the poor man’s astounding success, a common theme in post-liberalization Indian novel is that of the life of the underbelly in the urban space. The trope of the city emerges as a focal point in many fictions that capture the conflict and
flux of the new, metamorphosing India. Liberalization of India, among its many effects, has brought in a restructuring of the modern city according to the tenets of neoliberal urbanism. Consequently, the neoliberal city has witnessed a growing compartmentalization of the urban space into the binaries of what David Harvey calls as “the micro-states of the rich and the poor” (“Neoliberalism and the City” 12), whereby the city is reconfigured to privilege the elite and marginalize the impoverished. A number of novels set against the backdrop of the cities thus depict the life and victimization of the underclass in the city space. Novels like Tarun Tejpal’s The Story of My Assassins portray how more and more public spaces are taken over by private entrepreneurship—converting the urban landscape predominantly into spaces of market-based consumption and leisure—and the way privileged classes gain priority over the contours of the city while the socio-economically marginal groups face exclusion and dispossession from the cityscape. Consequently, securing the city for the free market calls for state administered disciplinary techniques of social control that safeguard the neoliberal reconfiguration of the spaces, limit their access and implement exclusion, and most importantly conceptualize forms of regulation to police the population. Through the lives of the five criminals hailing from the margins of the society and the world of the middle class journalist narrator, The Story etches a polarized geography of Delhi that has been restructured as a global city of entrepreneurship, leisure and consumption; and one that spatially quarantines and disciplines the ‘potentially dangerous’ poor, marginal and homeless groups through various methods of eviction, incarceration and surveillance. Concurrently, the theme of surveillance is manifest in more subtle forms in Vikram
Chandra’s novel *Sacred Games*, where the ideological tenets of neoliberal surveillance are embodied through aesthetic techniques in the novel form itself. The narrative technique of *Sacred Games* embodies a fictional panopticon that conflates criminality with the marginal subject and renders him an object of discourse and consequent disciplining. The contemporary resurgence of the novels that depict the criminal underbelly and the dark side of the glossy metropolitan cities signify the interest in the unknown threat of the socio-economic margins, which are often construed as potentially dangerous groups in the urban space, and thus subjects of curiosity, apprehension and vigilance.

Besides the novels on neoliberal subject and the global urban space, a third category of novels that I analyze invoke the theme of environment and the victimization of the marginal communities—an issue that constitutes one of the most voiced concerns against globalization. Novels like *Animal’s People* by Indra Sinha and *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh portray how the peripheral subjects are affected when globalization reshapes the environment, whether in terms of environmental deterioration or conservation, and consequently influences man’s unique relationship with nature. Indra Sinha’s novel narrates the plight of Bhopal’s poor and sick residents struggling for a safe environment and basic human rights even after two decades of the massive industrial disaster in 1984, and depicts how multinational corporations form an unholy nexus with the nation state to exploit the resources of a developing nation and yet evade corporate responsibility when a disaster ensues, leaving the poorest citizens of the country as its worst victims. Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* on the other hand describes how global
environmentalism and ecotourism become menacing forces that evict and displace the third world poor, dispossessing them consequently from the very natural resources on which they depend for daily subsistence. Both the novels portray the silencing of the marginal groups as potential factors in the decision making process about the local environment, which is often affected by global forces that leave the local marginals as hapless, unacknowledged victims in the meta-project of globalization. These three thematic categories of contemporary Indian fiction depict how the figure of the marginal is variously represented in post-liberalization Indian novels, invoking the varying effects of globalization on the peripheries of society.

However, to analyze the politics of representation of the marginal subjects in the literary texts of post-liberalization India, as well as the current resurgence of Indian literature that depicts the lives of the marginal under globalization, one needs to go beyond the thematic issues of the texts to understand the ‘ideology’ of neoliberalism in the Marxist sense of the term and the way literary texts corroborate and resist it. One of the most significant characteristics of the neoliberal Empire, Hardt and Negri point out, is that it not only regulates economic exchange but also seeks to directly to rule over human nature (xvi). Similarly, Foucault points out in *The Birth of Biopolitics* that neoliberal ideology “has to intervene on society so that competitive mechanisms can play a regulatory role at every moment and every point in society and by intervening in this way its objective will become possible, that is to say, a general regulation of society by the market” (133). Thus, as neoliberalism seeks to realign the society in accordance to an economic grid, it requires the state and other institutions to “govern” the populations as
active and yet ‘willing’ participants of the market—producing as Foucault terms it as “a permanent consensus of all those who may appear as agents within these economic processes, as investors, workers, employers, and trade unions. All these economic partners produce a consensus, which is a political consensus, inasmuch as they accept this economic game of freedom” (84).

Since neoliberalism hinges strongly on disciplining of populations into ideal subjects for the market regime, it is imperative that we look beyond just the politico-economic policies of the state into other modes of mass control, especially through cultural forms, analyzing how neoliberalism might operate as an “ideology” in the Marxist sense of the term. Raymond Williams cogently sums up the notion of ideology through its three distinct characteristics:

i) a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group

ii) a system of illusory beliefs—false ideas or false consciousness—which can be contrasted with true or scientific knowledge

iii) The general process of the production of meanings and ideas (54)

Ideology thus becomes a repressive system to maintain social order and transform individuals into the role of what Althusser terms as the complying “subject”. Here I want to quickly recapitulate the two seminal concepts on ideology—Gramsci’s notion of “cultural hegemony” and Althusser’s notion of the “Ideological State Apparatus”—to situate my discussion of neoliberalism as an “ideology” for the new global order.

Analyzing how dominant groups exercise power over society, Gramsci formulates the notion of “hegemony” (12) that signifies what Boggs sums up as “the prevailing
consciousness that has been internalized by the population [so that] it becomes part of what is generally called 'common sense' so that the philosophy, culture and morality of the ruling elite comes to appear as the natural order of things (39). Althusser takes Gramsci’s ideas further to theorize on the specific organs of the system of ideology. Thus, taking the context of capitalistic societies, Althusser denotes the state and many social institutions are essentially “repressive” and ones that control the citizens’ desires, preferences, beliefs and thoughts. For Althusser, the ideological state apparatus (ISA) controls its citizens also through the domain of ideology which operates through apparatuses working in other “private” institutions of social existence: namely religion, education, family, law, trade unions, communication and culture (143). The transformation of the ‘individual’ into ‘subjects’ of ideology through Ideological State

14 Gramsci asserts that Central to the system of hegemony are the two forms of control—the “Political government” which constitutes the "apparatus of state coercive power which 'legally' enforces discipline on those groups who do not 'consent' either actively or passively” and the “social hegemony” that generates “spontaneous consent” from the “great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group” (SPN 12).

15 For Althusser, the ideological state apparatus (ISA) is distinct from the other politico-governmental state apparatuses—consisting of direct state intervention through the “public” bodies of “the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, the Prisons”. Together they contribute to the same result—“the reproduction of the relations of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation. Althusser asserts that “ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all)” by the operation that he calls as “interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: ‘Hey, you there!’”(174).
Apparatus constitutes an effective mechanism of regulation by the capitalistic state, serving as agents of economic “exploitation and repression” (133).

Along these lines, the ideological tenor of neoliberalism as a “common sense” in the Gramscian sense of the term has been reiterated by various scholars like David Harvey and Saadia Toor, Duggan, Rachel Turner and others. David Harvey points out how neoliberalism has come be a “common sense” in contemporary society, propagated through “powerful ideological influences circulated through the corporations, the media, and the numerous institutions that constitute civil society—such as universities, schools, churches and professional associations” (40). Taking these notions of ideology in the context of neoliberalism, the cultural apparatuses of ideology like literature assumes immense significance. As Raymond Williams calls literature “actively ideological” (45), it is pertinent to analyze the postcolonial Indian novel in the age of globalization to assess the way literary texts conceptualize and embody the ideologies of neoliberalism, or critique them in emphatic resistance to the oppressive realities of globalization. Thus, to analyze the new postcolonial literature of India, we must deconstruct the ideological and material aspects that define neoliberal globalization, and explore the specific ways those aspects are represented in the literary texts.

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16 Gramsci defines ‘common sense’ as such: “Its most fundamental characteristic is that it is a conception which, even in the brain of one individual, is fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential, in conformity with the social and cultural position of those masses whose philosophy it is. At those times when a homogeneous social group is brought into being, there comes into being also, in opposition to common sense, a homogeneous - in other words coherent and systematic - philosophy. (419)
Chapter Division:

This dissertation is divided into four chapters, and a concluding discussion.

The first chapter discusses the theoretical framework and analytical methodologies for this project. Placing my project as a part of the materialist turn in postcolonial studies—which seeks to take a new turn from the cultural focus of postcolonialism to the materialist realities of the globalized world—I justify my project as a valuable contribution in providing a model in actually applying theories of globalization to read contemporary postcolonial literature that has moved beyond the traditional debates of colonialism and the nation state to respond to the more recent changes brought in by economic globalization in the nations of the global south.

In the second chapter, I read the novels of rags-to-riches story, exploring how the marginal subject is constructed as a powerful testimony of the success of neoliberal globalization through a detailed reading of Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger* and Vikas Swarup’s *Q&A*.

The third chapter seeks to explore the novels of the oppressive disciplining of the marginal subject, especially in a neoliberal urban space. I read two urban novels—Tarun Tejpal’s *The Story of My Assassins* and Vikram Chandra’s *Sacred Games*, set in the contemporary metropolitan cities of Delhi and Mumbai.

The fourth chapter focuses on the theme of environmental issues in contemporary India in the context of the victimization of the marginal groups through the two novels—Indra Sinha’s *Animal’s People* and Amitav Ghosh’ *The Hungry Tide*. 
Finally, I summarize the various notions of the marginal subject that I discuss throughout the project and conclude how post-millennium Indian novels depict the effects of globalization on the lives of the common, underprivileged people that correspond to the ways the marginal subject is appropriated and controlled in the real post-globalized world.
CHAPTER 1

Globalization and Postcolonial Studies: Towards A New Direction in Literary Postcolonialism

I certainly think there is a post-post-colonial generation. I'm sure a lot of voices you're seeing coming out now are people who never had a colonial experience. We don't place a burden of guilt on someone who's no longer there. So it's like, what are we doing with where we come from, and how can we address issues here. It's our fault if things aren't going well. That's a very different stance than a lot of what's come before.

--------Mohsin Hamid, “The Chronicle Online”

As I set out to discuss the new literature of a postcolonial nation like India in the context of the socio-political-economic realities of contemporary globalization, the question arises as to where can I place my work in the field of postcolonial studies? How does the project seek to contribute to the growth of the field? How can this dissertation project new ways of understanding contemporary postcolonial literature and embody the new models of literary analysis in the field of postcolonial studies as a response to the changing dynamics of postcolonial societies and nations in the era of global capitalism? In terms of its theoretical orientation, this dissertation seeks to place itself as a part of the
materialist turn in postcolonial studies—a revision of the earlier cultural focus of postcolonial thinking towards an emphasis on the material realities of globalization as well. Thus the global turn in postcolonial studies takes the discipline beyond the postcolonial issues of culture, identity and hybridity that had been the central concerns of postcolonialism for quite some years and focuses on issues like transnational capital flow, the economics of inequality, the restructuring of the nation state, migration of labor, structural marginalization of the poor and the minorities, neoliberal ideologies and policies. Consequently, my dissertation not only explores how the current postcolonial literatures thematically respond to the issues of globalization, it also seeks to analyze literature through what Graham Huggan lists as the three most important characteristics of the new postcolonial critical framework—namely, a renewed vigilance of capitalistic networks, an intersection with other disciplines other than English literary studies and a focus on the questions of marginalization within the context of the nation state (“Interdisciplinary” 241). My dissertation is an exploration into the global turn in postcolonial studies—both in terms of the new literary works from the non-Western world as well as the new critical frameworks that address the concerns of the postcolonial nations in the modern day globalized world.
The Lacuna of Postcolonialism:

To fully place my work as a part of the materialist revision of postcolonial studies, it is important to first discuss the materialist critique of postcolonialism that has been a central debate in the field for the last two decades. One of the major criticisms of postcolonial theory has been its failure to address the power dynamics of the contemporary globalized world, a critique largely emanating mostly from the Marxist critics of postcoloniality who urge for a materialist reading of the post-colonial condition and globalization, rather than just a cultural interpretation that is primarily reached through the paradigms of poststructuralism. Thus, while the cultural critics of

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17 A branch of Marxist criticism, materialist criticism, as David Murphy succinctly sums up, “is concerned with analyzing the cultural text within its historical context. In its most enlightening and complex forms, materialist criticism highlights the social, cultural, political, economic and gender issues—that is the ‘material’ realities—with which the text engages and which in turn have shaped the text (181). Materialist critics and postcolonial cultural critics have assumed contrary positions in a long trajectory that dates back to their differential interpretation of the colonial process itself. Again while postcolonialism takes a cultural turn through Edward Said’s Orientalism, the debate between materialist critics and cultural postcolonialists have been invoked in the contrasting positions regarding Fanon vs Aime, between critics Eagleton vs Said, and between Bhabha vs Ahmad.

18 Postcolonialism’s anti-colonial stand, primarily reached through the binaries between the colonizer and the colonized and evident in the early work of Fanon, Memmi and Mannoni, became redundant in later postcolonialism that was deeply influenced by the interrogations of binaries in poststructuralism. Postcolonialism’s post-structural turn is epitomized by Bhabha’s concept of the hybridity, "hybridity' which is commonly defined as “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization” (Ashcroft, Griffith, Tiffin 118). Thus the binaries of the Self and the Other, the colonizer and the colonized, the oppressor and the oppressed were overshadowed by the concepts of in-betweenness, contact zones, cultural amalgamation, multiculturalism, which distinctly aim more at paradigms of synthesis and
postcolonialism like Bhaba and proponents of cultural globalization like Arjun Appadurai—who is widely cited in postcolonial theory—celebrate the transnational flow of culture and the erasure of boundaries as something emancipatory, the materialist critics argue for a more critical reading of globalization in terms of the capital flow and socio-economic dynamics. Materialist Marxist critics and postcolonial cultural critics have assumed contrary positions in a long trajectory that dates back to their differential interpretation of the colonial process itself. David Murphy succinctly summarizes the long history of materialist critique of postcolonial studies, which he points out, revolves around three major criticisms:

a) Postcolonialism’s deep alliance with poststructuralism that “focuses on textual issues instead of historical issues” and reads colonialism through the paradigm of representation rather than any other form of socio-economic exploitation

b) Postcolonialism’s conceptualization of the migrant as the “archetype of a postcolonial identity” that prioritizes the notions of hybridity, ambivalence and in-betweenness, and is essentially based on the postcolonial elite

c) The temporal ambiguity of postcolonialism that celebrates the contemporary world as an emancipatory space for the free flow of culture and borderless-ness, whereas the materialist critics interpret current globalization through their concerns for neocolonialism (183)
The long standing dispute between the two fields has often resulted in fierce critiques and disavowals of each other, with the contestation reaching its peak in the context of contemporary globalization. While neither Marxist materialism nor Postcolonialism is a theoretically flawless, self-sufficient critical framework capable of addressing the various complexities of globalization exclusively on its own, the intersection of the two has led to a mutual enrichment of both the fields. Consequently, postcolonialism must continue to revise itself to embrace the materialist contexts along with the cultural ones, in order to address the crisis and power dynamics of transnational capital and neoliberal underpinnings of the contemporary globalized world.

One of the earliest and significant materialist critiques of postcolonialism comes from Ella Shohat in her seminal essay “Notes on the Postcolonial.” Among Shohat’s many critiques of the term postcolonial, one important issue she raises is that postcolonial scholarship seems to consider colonialism as an event of the past, failing to address the continuing legacy of colonialism through “neocolonial” economic globalization and military occupations of the contemporary day and age. Her impassioned critique is worth quoting at length:

As a signifier of a new historical epoch, the term "post-colonial," when compared with neo-colonialism, comes equipped with little evocation of contemporary power relations; it lacks a political content which can account for the eighties and nineties-style U.S. militaristic involvements in Granada, Panama, and Kuwait-Iraq,…The "post-colonial" leaves no space, finally, for the struggles of aboriginals in Australia and indigenous peoples throughout the Americas, in other
words, of Fourth World peoples dominated by both First World multi-national corporations and by Third World nation-states. (105)

Shohat’s objection against the concept of postcolonialism is primarily a problem of temporality. For Shohat, the notion of the “colonial” in postcolonialism is completely disjoint from the contemporary imperialistic ventures or military interventions of “Anglo-American free-trade hegemony” (104), evident through instances of the U.S militaristic interventions in Iraq, Panama, Granada to protect its oil interests in the Gulf, or the Trade Liberalization Treaty in Mexico—which Shohat identifies as “new forms of colonialism, i.e neocolonialism” (107). Thus, postcolonial studies, as Shohat points out back in 1992, had failed to take into account the forces of transnational capitalism that has started to restructure the world in a way that it can no longer be understood solely through the paradigm of the earlier colonialism. In fact, as Shohat recounts, the resistive potential of the concept of postcolonial has been significantly eroded for while the conservative members of Shohat’s college curriculum committee at CUNY strongly resisted any language that referred to issues like “imperialism” and “neocolonialism,” they were apparently “visibly relieved at the sight of the word “post-colonial’” (99) which seemed less threatening to the contemporary hegemony.

Shohat’s criticism is taken a step further by Arif Dirlik in his famous article “The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism,” whereby he not only asserts, along Shohat’s line, the inadequacy of postcolonial studies in the contemporary context of global capitalism, but goes further to argue that “postcoloniality is the condition of global capitalism” (356). Dirlik strongly contends that the world has
moved beyond the conditions of colonialism and transformed into a “global capitalist network” (349) headed by transnational corporations. The changes are more than evident—capitalism has been decentered nationally, production has been transnationalized, and most importantly, “the narrative of contemporary capitalism is no longer historically specific to Europe (350), whereas postcolonial thinking is still centered on Europe as the center of its theorizations. Thus, for Dirlik the Eurocentric model and the paradigm of colonialism that form the crux of postcolonial studies are utterly inadequate to address the workings of the contemporary globalized world. Dirlik’s target is specifically the postcolonial critics in Western academia whose increased visibility and academic respectability, Dirlik asserts, are affirmed precisely because the concepts of postcolonial criticism resonate with the global consciousness of “capitalistic world economy” or “global capitalism” (330). For Dirlik, the primary problem is not only that the postcolonial critics are “silent” in the context of contemporary capitalism (331) but also that postcolonialism, as an academic discipline, plays a proactive role in diverting the attention from contemporary power dynamics of global capitalism. It does so, Dirlik argues, by “throwing the cover of culture over material relationships” (347) and by constructing a privileged postcolonial identity that rejects class relations and by prioritizing “local interactions” over “global structures” that shape them, thereby proposing the hybridity or “in-betweenness of the postcolonial subject” (Dirlik 336). Consequently, Dirlik argues, postcolonialism itself is a theoretical endeavor to cover up for the crisis of global capitalism: “To put it bluntly, postcoloniality is designed to avoid making sense of the current crisis and, in the process, to cover up the origins of
postcolonial intellectuals in a global capitalism of which they are not so much victims as beneficiaries” (353).

Dirlik’s claim of the complicity of the postcolonial critics with the forces of global capitalism echoes the famous indictment by A. K. Appiah in his essay ”Is the Post-in Postmodernism the Post-in Postcolonial?” where Appiah asserts that “postcoloniality is the condition of what we might ungenerously call a comprador intelligentsia: a relatively small, Western-style, Western-trained group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery” (348). Taking the case of Nigerian artworks that circulate in the global market, Appiah contends that the postcolonial-postmodern theorization of the global flow of culture as a celebratory process of exchange and dissolution of binaries also signifies how these fields of study “are remarkably insensitive to, not so much dismissive of as blind to, the issue of neocolonial-ism or ‘cultural imperialism’ ” (348).

Most of the criticism against postcolonialism as an ineffective tool to understand globalization stems from this critique of postcolonialism as too deeply entrenched in postmodernism. The crux of the issue lies in postcolonialism’s emphasis on ‘hybridity,’ which is identified as an essentially postmodern concept and celebrated as a condition of globalization. One of the most vocal voices against hybridity has been that of Aijaz Ahmad, who in his famous essay “The Politics Of Literary Postcoloniality” critiques postcolonialism for its insistence on postmodernism—a paradigm he describes as nothing but “apocalyptic anti-Marxism”(110). Ahmad’s objection to the postmodern leanings of postcolonial studies concerns its three major thematic concerns: a) “the theme of
'hybridity’, 'ambivalence’ and 'contingency’, as it surfaces especially in Bhabha’s writing but also much beyond; (b) the theme of the collapse of the nation-state as a horizon of politics; and (c) the theme of globalised, postmodern electronic culture, which is seen at times as a form of global entrapment and at other times as yielding the very pleasures of global hybridity”. Thus, for Ahmad, while the nation state increasingly gains in importance and continues to play a significant role especially in the context of state control over transnational finance, the celebration of globalization of culture through global electronic media is to foreground the “structural offensive of capital,” or “imperialist ideology” the when substantial proportions of the global population” are deprived of “conditions of bare survival, let alone electronic literacy and gadgetry” (13). For Ahmad thus, the postcolonial critic claiming cultural hybridity, which he terms as “carnivalesque” (13), assumes an essentially elite position. Thus, the privileged migrant who can “live a life of constant mobility and surplus pleasure” is totally dissociated from the class struggles and local resistances (13). Ahmad not only declares postcolonialism as incapable of addressing the crisis of contemporary global capitalism, he also echoes in Dirlik’s line of argument, that the postcolonial cultural critics are themselves consumers and producers of interchangeable, commodified cultures that represent the “depthlessness and whimsicality of postmodernism - the cultural logic of Late Capitalism”—in Jameson’s superb phrase”(17).

In a similar way, Slavoj Zizek too rejects the critical framework of postcolonialism that seeks to prioritize the question of cultural difference over other material aspects of power hierarchy, whereby “we learn that the root of postcolonial
exploitation is our intolerance toward the Other and, furthermore, that this intolerance itself is rooted in our intolerance toward the "stranger in Ourselves," in our inability to "confront what we repressed in and of ourselves" (195). Consequently, as Zizek argues, prioritizing this multicultural model transforms the politico-economic struggle into “pseudopsychoanalytic drama of the subject unable to confront its inner traumas”, an approach that dangerously neglects the “global capitalist coordinates” (195). Again, for many like Lawrence Grossberg, this neglect of global capitalism actually amounts to a complicit alliance with it. As Sabine Milz points out, Grossberg asserts that “the postmodernist faith in difference and hybridity as forms of agency and emancipation may appear ironic precisely because it plays into the power field of neoliberal globalization, whose decentered structures and logics of power deconstruct the very notions of the modern subject and the modern nation-state challenged in postmodern (-postcolonial) critiques” (28). Grossberg’s argument of the implicit connection between multiculturalism and neoliberal ideology is also something that Walter Benn Michaels also points out, asserting that the neoliberal novel diverts the attention from economic issues to issues of cultural difference, asserting cultural equality as the highest form of emancipation: “What the neoliberal novel likes about cultural difference is that it sentimentalizes social conflict, imagining that what people really want is respect for their otherness rather than money for their mortgages”. The eclipsing of the material by the cultural as discursive categories in postcolonialism has been the central critique against the otherwise fecund discipline.
However, it is not only the Marxist critics who point out these crucial gaps in postcolonialism as an efficient critical framework for the contemporary world. Postcolonial literary critics and supporters, who emphatically place themselves within the field of postcolonial studies and defend many of its contributions as valuable, also recognize this lack and the need for the consequent revision of the discipline. Thus, though defending postcolonialism against the critiques of Ahmad and Dirlik, they do agree on the fact that the field needs to address its lack in terms of the changing material realities of globalization. For example, as a cultural theorist Stuart Hall defends postcolonialism with the claim that all the recent developments of our modern world—like the power politics of Gulf War—can be understood through the context of colonialism, as a crisis of the struggle for decolonization (244). Hall strongly objects the strict periodization of the post-colonial history into a separate period of global capitalism, that both Shohat and Dirlik seem to argue for, and instead applauds postcolonialism for rupturing the meta-narratives of European modernity through a more radical intervention of colonialism that also offers important insights the moment of current globalization as well. Thus citing Dirlik’s criticism Hall contends that all the contemporary issues of economic globalization that Dirlik lists in his essay as ignored by the postcolonialists — the “new international division of labor,” “de-centering of capitalism nationally,” “the transnationalization of production” (Dirlik 350); “the weakening of boundaries,” the homogenization of culture (Dirlik 353)—are themes that are often dealt by the ‘distinct’ theoretical paradigm of postcolonial studies. In spite of his impassioned advocacy for postcolonialism, Hall too asserts that traditional postcolonialism has failed to address the
issues of the contemporary world. However for Hall, the problem with postcolonialism is not so much its cultural framework as it is a question of restricted temporality—since in spite of being theoretically sophisticated to potentially address the crisis of the contemporary world, postcolonialism has been undermined by the shortsightedness of the postcolonial intellectuals who have mostly restricted themselves to the historical period of colonialism in their writings, instead of exploring the ideas of postcolonialism in other contemporary contexts. For Hall, this has been “seriously damaging” (257) for the field, and he asserts that Dirlik is justified to call for a critical assessment in postcolonial studies as a “genuine theoretical need” (258).

A seminal postcolonialist, Ania Loomba follows Hall’s line of argument in defending the importance of postcolonial discourses. Arguing that subaltern discourses, narratives of colonized people, women and other minorities “revise our understanding” of the grand narratives of “colonialism, capitalism and modernity” (249), Ania Loomba asserts that “capitalism, as it was theorized by traditional Marxism” alone cannot be an adequate model for explaining the complexities of colonialism (249). Loomba then asserts, contrary to Dirlick’s plea for a critical framework based on capitalism, the importance of postcolonialism as an intervention to understand the peripheries of the non-Western world. Echoing Hall’s indictment that the postcolonial marks a critical interruption into the grand narratives of Europe, including Marxism, Loomba asserts that “global narratives” seem to swallow the complexities while postcolonialism offers an understanding of the same narratives though the context of the “local and the marginalised” (249). However, having said that, Loomba also articulates the need of
situating postcolonial discourse in the current context of globalization. Loomba agrees with Dirlik on the point that postcolonial intellectuals do not pay serious attention to the operations of global capitalism today (250) and asserts that “whether this neglect is due to disciplinary training and affiliations of postcolonial critics…there is no doubt that neither local nor global cultures, neither nation nor hybridity, can be thought about seriously without considering how they are shaped by economic systems” (250). Thus Loomba emphatically asserts that if postcolonial studies “has to survive in a meaningful way it needs to absorb itself far more deeply in the contemporary world and the local circumstances within which colonial institutions are being moulded into the disparate cultural and socio-economic practices which define our contemporary ‘globality’ ” (257).

In another defense of postcolonialism, Kalpana Sheshadri-Crooks critiques Ahmad’s criticism for its contradictory arguments and its reductive assessment of postcolonialism. Arguing that a stability of class and national identities, that Ahmad seems to urge for, might not be possible in this “age of total capitalist penetration” (62), Crooks commends postcolonial studies for its very “amorphousness that permits it to be simultaneously self-critical and oppositional”(66). Simultaneously she rejects Marxism as a self-sufficient discipline with “some sort of ready-made grid that can be imposed upon social realities”. Rather she argues “Marxism is itself a highly conflictual discourse whose terms and concepts must be constantly negotiated if they are to be made useful” (65). Thus for Crooks, the crisis of postcolonial studies (she does admit that there is a melancholy and incoherence from within the field) is not a question of its amorphousness but rather an inability to theorize on the notion of the marginality, which misleadingly
aligns postcolonialism with the project of multiculturalism and concerns of cultural marginality, instead of a socio-political one—“it is imperative to see how the agenda of postmodern criticism again embarrasses “postcoloniality” by once more characterizing it as the discourse of the margin (as the space of otherness), by placing it at the vanguard of cultural and political critique” (53).

However, most other postcolonial critics concur with the materialist critics in reproving postcolonialism’s too deep entrenchment with postmodernism, which renders postcolonialism an ineffective framework to conceptualize globalization. Milz rightly notes that other notable essays such as Simon Gikandi’s “Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality” and Simon During's “Postcolonialism and Globalization: Towards a Historicization of Their Inter-relation” attest to the same ideas that “while globalization and postcoloniality have become two major paradigms for expounding the global spread of capitalist culture, the relationship between the two has remained unclear and ineffectual, mostly because of first world postcolonial study's postmodernist penchants”.

Citing the case of two Guinean boys whose dead bodies were found in a cargo plane when they were trying to flee away to Europe, Gikandi comments that concepts of ‘hybridity’ and ‘difference,’ that “comes directly from the grammar book of postcolonial theory,” (628) project a celebratory narrative of globalization that is different from the dystopic “material experiences of everyday life and survival” (632) of the poor in the poorer nations. Thus as Gikandi points out, the postcolonial celebration of cultural hybridity through the figure of the comprador “émigré elite” (644) eludes the more critical crisis of globalization for the common, marginalized poor—“the globalization
that they had in mind when they became stowaways on the European plane was different from that espoused by postcolonial theorists. The boys were neither seeking cultural hybridity nor ontological difference. Their quest was for a modern life in the European sense of the world; their risky journey from Africa was an attempt to escape both poverty and alterity” (631). Thus for Gikandi, it is these lived material realities of globalization that postcolonialism fails to take into account in its exclusive quest for non-binary, transnational, postmodern cultural identities. While Gikandi credits the likes of Bhaba and Appadurai for constituting a cultural practice based on difference and hybridity that undermines the grand narrative of European modernity (633), he points out the glaring flaws of postcolonialism in its exclusive over-emphasis on literary and artistic images rather than on other socio-economic parameters of understanding globalization: the emphasis on culture in postcolonial theory hinders the recognition of the global experience as a structural experience (produced out of the complex interaction of politics, economics, the social, and the like). As long as globalization is conceived as a cultural rather than a structural experience, it functions as what Roland Robertson has called “a site of social theoretical interests, interpretative indulgence, or the display of world-ideological preferences”; considered as an aggregate of local experiences in displacement rather than a structure patterned by causal relationships, the culture of globalization cannot account for “the global-human condition (644)

Similarly, discussing postcolonialism under the two contrary rubrics of “critical postcolonialism” and “reconciliatory postcolonialism,” (385) Simon During asserts that
by setting out notions like “hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence” that intermingle the
colonized into colonizing cultures, postcolonialism has become more “reconciliatory
rather than a critical, anti-colonialist category”(386).19 During critiques the naïve
assumptions of postcolonial approach to celebrate the flow of culture as a resistive and
emancipatory process, asserting the deep nexus between culture, capital, the global
market and “economically-directed political interests” (388), whereby culture itself
becomes a commodity, as well as an ideological tool of interpellation into the global
economy. For During, the question is less that cultures are in mélange, but rather he is
more concerned about the political economy behind the flow of cultures: “under what
structures and pressures are cultural agents all around the world making choices what to
communicate or export, what to import and graft, when to shift cross-border allegiances
and target new markets/audiences, and when to reshuffle their own cultural repertoire to
exploit, bolster, shrink or transform their traditions and heritages?” (388). During thus
completely rejects the “reconciliatory postcolonialism” of the canonical postcolonial
literary critics—caustically assaulting it for assuming a position that seems to portray
colonialism with a “happy ending,” where the world has supposedly been unified and de-
spatialized and colonial repression has become obsolete (392). Rather, During focuses on
“critical cosmopolitanism”—which though in some ways is reductive in its
conceptualization of a fixed “West” that no longer exists in the age of transnational

19 During distinguishes between critical and reconciliatory postcolonialisms,
asserting “that the former seeks radical alternatives to modernity based on non-
Western traditions and lifeways, while the latter works to reconcile colonized
peoples to colonialism”(385)
capitalism—nevertheless recognizes that globalization does not put an end to local ethnic and colonialist struggles but rather continually re-articulates and re-places them in a more dispersed world system (402).

Among many other critics who seek an amendment of traditional postcolonialism through materialist revisions, Benita Parry constitutes another important name. Parry avowedly places herself within the field of postcolonial studies and assigns considerable importance to the reading of the literary texts along with the theoretical discussions. Parry’s major contribution to the field, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*, argues for a materialist revision of the “myopic perspective of postcolonial studies” (3) into an inclusion of social and experiential paradigms of contemporary globalization. Like most materialist critics, Parry reproaches the linguistic and cultural turn in postcolonial studies that alienated the discipline from the historical, political and social interpretation of colonialism and its concomitant aftereffects. Parry’s critique is chiefly directed towards the trend of colonial discourse analysis and the triumvirate of postcolonial theory—Said, Bhabha and Spivak—who by rejecting the binary oppositions of power between the colonizer and the colonized project only a discursive and representational mode of resistance reached through a deconstructivist reading of the text. Thus for Bhabha, Parry points out, the ‘hybrid moment’ is reached only through the deconstructivist act of locating ambivalence and disjunctures of the colonialist text which displaces the ‘authorizing presence’ (“Signs taken for Wonders” 25); while for Spivak (“Can the Subaltern Speak?”) the colonized subaltern is subjected to an epistemic violence and forever relegated to silence, who again can be retrieved only through an
deconstructivist reading. Parry argues that these approaches of prioritizing the discursive paradigm over the material undermine the social praxis of people who are still engaged in “colonial struggles against contemporary forms of neocolonialism” (26). Projecting an alternative practice of approaching literature, Parry thus refers to Abdul Jan Mohamed’s essay “The Economy of Manichean Allegory” for its reading of colonial literature in an alternative way—whereby it serves “a necessary reminder that colonialism was a protean phenomenon and its discursive violence inseparable from material and institutional force” (28). Simultaneously, asserting that Marxism is not necessarily at tandem with questions of culture, Parry calls for a model of critical framework, borrowing from Jameson, that seeks to “grasp culture in and for itself, but also in relationship to its outside, its content, its context, and its space of intervention and of effectivity” (Jameson 47, qtd in Parry 5).

The materialist critiques and reconsiderations of postcolonialism thus claim that though postcolonialism has made valuable contributions in theorizing the cultural dynamics of the colonizing process; in positing a critical framework that transcends the grand Eurocentric narratives and in proposing a more nuanced notion of non-binary identities, the field of postcolonial studies has failed to recognize the influence of the global circulation of capital power. This however does not spell the end of postcolonialism as a relevant field of critical enquiry. Not only is postcolonialism indispensable in addressing the complexities of the non-Western, erstwhile colonies that cannot be effectively theorized solely by the related fields of culture studies, area studies or Marxism, postcolonialism has been one of the most intellectually fecund fields that has
constantly questioned itself as a discipline, embraced a wide variety of concerns and that which refuses to impose a strict, reductive methodological framework on the reading of the texts. It is its very amorphousness and broad scope to address multiple issues concerning power, in manifold variety of ways that makes postcolonialism a discipline with immense potential to address the crisis of contemporary globalisation. Works like *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* by Ania Loomba, Suvir Kaul and et all, strongly proclaim the immense possibilities of critical explorations and interdisciplinary work one can explore through postcolonialism. As one of the essays in the volume by O’Brien And Imre Szeman boldly asserts—“no other critical practice has foregrounded the links between cultural forms and geopolitics to the degree that postcolonial studies has over the past four decades” (8). Subsequently, the editors of the volume sends out a clarion call for a new turn in postcolonial studies to make it more relevant as a critical field in the contemporary era of globalization. The editors see postcolonial studies reasserting its vocation through an exploration of the “contemporary shape of neoliberal global institutions” and an understanding of “the wide ideological and intellectual spectrum that has begun—very recently—to align itself with the global juggernaut” (13) mainly by shifting the attention to the USA model of neoliberal globalization. Simultaneously, they remind us that postcolonial studies, along with its focus on a decentralized network of capital and power, also needs to maintain its “historical awareness of imperialism” (14), which can contribute valuable insights into analyzing the processes of neocolonialism. The future of postcolonial studies is thus not of obsolescence but rather of a revised and
more sentient critical thinking grounded both in the dynamics of culture as well as the materialist concerns of lived experiences.

It is also important to mention here that a materialist turn in postcolonialism does not necessarily imply a) a total rejection of the cultural, experiential and ideological dimensions of the literary text; nor does it suggest b) a rejection of literary approaches by strictly applying the methodologies of other disciplines like economics or sociology or political science; nor seeks to c) overlook the politics and questions of representation in the texts. Imre Szeman very aptly addresses this fear against materialist criticism and points out that materialist cultural and literary criticism has often been fraught with several “misunderstandings”—either it is conceived in utterly reductive forms or has been “identified with the glum vocabulary of an older, parodic version of Marxist criticism” (2). I concur with Szeman who points out that materialist criticism is primarily “interested in the study of context or the historical situation or situatedness” (2), and cannot be totally conflated with either Marxist criticism or New Historicism criticism, though it does borrow from those fields. In its very simplistic conception, the new postcolonialism is a syncretistic discipline, which in Milz’s words, “excludes neither the study of the interiority of literary texts (traditional textual analysis) nor the study of "literature's relation to the processes of globalization as they manifest themselves in a variety of historical periods” (Jay 35).

But what are the broad tropes through which a more materialistic postcolonial literary analysis can be reached in the context of globalization? What specific revisions or disciplinary turns do the new literary postcolonialism can envision? Highlighting the
focal points of my dissertation, I propose four main paradigms through which postcolonialism can be thought out as an effective critical framework for literary analysis in the era of globalization:

One of the ways through which the new postcolonial readings of contemporary literature can address the material conditions of globalization is through an understanding of the politics of production, dissemination and reception of the postcolonial texts as cultural commodities in the global literary market. Taking cues from the enquiries of the new historicists, it is important that postcolonialism also explores the historical context of the production of the text and its role as an ideological artifact in the way it responds to the tenets of neoliberal globalization. Thus, the new interventions in postcolonial literary studies, Milz argues, should not merely focus on texts that thematize the socio-economic-political realities of globalization but must go beyond the content of the text and rather understand “the relationship between literature and globalization within the larger context of contemporary power relations between nation-states, institutions, corporations, global markets, international trade and policy instruments (e.g. the World Bank, WTO, IMF, TRIPS, GATS), and so on. Thus, with the production and consumption of the contemporary postcolonial novel inextricably tied with its commercial gains in the book market, the involvement of the international publishing houses, the corporate methods of publicity, and the marketability of the writer himself/herself, it has become increasing imperative to analyze the postcolonial texts as cultural products circulating in the global literary market. Graham Huggan’s *The Postcolonial Exotic* and Bishnupriya Ghosh’s *When Borne Across: Literary Cosmopolitics* are both important interventions in situating
postcolonial literature in the context of the politics of global culture flow. Consequently it is also important to see how the postcolonial text embodies an ‘ideology’ in the Marxist sense of the term and the particular ideas it disseminates as either tool of or a resistance to the ‘hegemony’ of global capitalism. Since neoliberalism permeates into every sphere of one’s lived experience, the ideological underpinnings and the cultural apparatus of neoliberalism seek sufficient attention. Consequently, since postcolonialism has already been one of the most productive fields to theorize on the ideological import of imperialism of colonial and postcolonial literature in various works like Said’s *Orientalism* and Gauri Viswanathan’s *Masks of Conquest*, new postcolonialism can also be an effective critical framework to explore the complex relationship between the text and the dominant hegemony of the new context—the globalized world. Thus when encountering a text like Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger*, a postcolonial critic needs to look beyond the narrative of the novel, deeper into the specific ideological paean it projects for neoliberalism and the politics of its marketing and reception in the global literary market. Similarly, Chandra’s *Sacred Games* reveals layers of meaning in its plot, narrative techniques and representational choices, only when seen through the ideological discourse it seems to project. Thus, current literature needs to be interpreted as a cultural commodity and ideological construct of globalization.

A second method of addressing the material contexts of neoliberal globalization is through analyzing the way these issues are thematized in the new texts. Reading postcolonial literature of a contemporary globalized world does not solely refer to an extra-literary reading of the text as a cultural and ideological product representing the
socio-economic history of the era; it also entails an understanding of the narrative and themes of the text through the material contexts encompassed in the text. Postcolonial literature post-globalization, as Paul Jay points out, is often “demonstratably different from what we might call the classic postcolonial texts, for, while they all allude in some way to the legacy of colonialism, they pay more attention to the contemporary effects of globalization than they do to the imperatives of postcolonial state making and the construction of specifically postcolonial identities and subjectivities” (95-96).

Consequently, the various dynamics of what Mohsin Hamid calls as “the post-postcolonial fiction” (qtd Jay 91), which he conceptualizes as embodying a marked disjuncture between the period of colonialization and the period of contemporary globalization, needs to be studied within the changing contexts of the erstwhile postcolonial worlds and its people. Not only are the traditional postcolonial literary tropes of colonialism, diaspora, and nationalism insufficient to understand many of the new fictions like the post 9/11 world of Hamid’s Reluctant Fundamentalist or the world of the unskilled illegal immigrants in Kiran Desai’s Inheritance of Loss, the crisis of the postcolonial migrants in these novels hardly arise from their split postcolonial psyches or from the conflicts of their cultural identity. The issues that they face, and the world that they live in, have been vigorously restructured by new social and economic changes that determine and shape their existence. Thus to read the literature of the contemporary world, one must understand the material realities of the contemporary world itself. What constitutes those material realities? Jameson’s list might be helpful:
the international division of labor, a vertiginous new dynamic in international banking and the stock exchanges (including the enormous Second and Third World debt), new forms of media interrelationship…computers and automation, the flight of production to advanced Third World Areas…and gentrification of a now-global scale. (xix)

Subsequently, new postcolonial literary criticism needs to actively engage with interdisciplinary endeavors, especially with the social sciences which have been proactive in theorizing on the various impacts of neoliberal globalization. The need is not to dismiss the literary for the material, but rather to enrich our understanding of the text through the insights of the other disciplines—exploring how the social, economic and political realities of contemporary postcolonial nations are conceived and projected in the cultural spheres. The literary representations of a rapidly changing Delhi in Tejpal’s *The Story of My Assassins* or the dynamics of Chandra’s modernized Mumbai cannot be fully grasped without the various insights about neoliberal cities from the urban geographers. Similarly, the resistive potential of a novel like *Animal’s People* can be fully understood only with a perception of the economics of transnational corporatization and the social activism of grass root protests. An interdisciplinary approach does not necessarily place the literary text within the trajectory of extra-literary documents, but enriches our understanding of the situatedness of the postcolonial text in the context it seeks to represent.

Thirdly, we need to reassess postcolonial marginality in the context of neoliberal globalization. Along with focusing on the materiality of the text and reassessing the
notion of culture in the context of globalization, postcolonial criticism also requires to re-conceptualize another of its seminal, and highly debated, concept—the notion of the marginal. The figure of the postcolonial marginal often forms the central point where the discourses of globalization and anti-globalization converge and contest, making the marginal a significant figure in the literature of globalization. Thus while the rhetoric of globalization particularly focus on the marginal groups and communities, extolling them as the target for globalization’s boons, anti-globalization protests too revolve around the repression and exploitation of the marginal in the global economy. The postcolonial marginal, as critics like Spivak and Sheshadri Crooks point out, cannot be theorized by disciplines like minority studies or race studies. The notion of marginality, especially in the context of South Asia, in postcolonial criticism invokes a complex web of caste, class, religious, racial, ethnic, gender and colonial paradigms of hierarchy which makes it completely distinct from minoritization in other contexts like the Western/European societies. As Spivak points out “the stories of the postcolonial world are not necessarily the same as the stories coming from ‘internal colonization,’ the way the metropolitan countries discriminate against disenfranchised groups in their midst” (“Who claims” 274). Simultaneously, it is also true that as the postcolonial nations take up economic liberalization with increasing frequency, the postcolonial critics need to revise the earlier notions of marginality in the context of the power structures of neoliberal globalization and may benefit from the insights on the marginalization based on the tenets of neoliberal ideology and policies that seem to be projecting another dimension to our current understanding of the classic postcolonial marginal.
New postcolonial criticism thus needs to consider the Third World marginal in the new context of globalization. It is against this notion of the new globalized era that Spivak theorizes on the new subaltern. Spivak asserts in “A New Subaltern” that “Today the ‘subaltern’ must be rethought. S/he is no longer cut off from lines of access to the center.”

The center as represented by the Bretton Woods agencies and the World Trade center, is altogether interested in the rural and indigenous subaltern” (326). Thus, the penetration of global capitalism—the New Empire—in the guise of the World Trade Organization, NGOs, bio-research companies, UN Development projects and human rights organizations—into the lowest levels of society is responsible for producing what Spivak terms the ‘new subaltern’ (276). This new subaltern, caught between global capitalism/development and tradition/culturalism, is now completely co-opted as her body is rendered data and she is sought after as intellectual property. Not only is the subaltern rendered as the site for global exploitation, the discourse of the concrete experience of the subaltern is constructed as a rationalization for globalization. Since the figure of the marginal embodies the crucial rhetoric, conflicts as well as resistive tropes of globalization, the new direction of postcolonialism, thus can be reached, as Sheshadri Crooks argues, through the “exploration of postcoloniality from the point of view of the margin (as the excluded and the limit)”(66). Similarly, the figures of Balram, Ram Mohammad, Salim, Kabir, Kaliya, Chini, Ganesh Gaitonde, Animal and Fokir depict a

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20 Spivak mocks at herself for the irony of her position: “Today’s program of global financialization carries on that relay. Bhubaneswari had fought for national liberation. Her great-grandniece works for the New Empire. This too is a historical silencing of the subaltern. (311)
rich discourse of how post-liberalization India has changed economically, politically, socially and geographically; and how the changing dynamics of a neoliberal India has affected those on the margins.

Finally, new postcolonial literary analysis needs to concentrate on a continued focus on the nation state in the context of globalization. Along with the figure of the marginal, new postcolonial criticism also needs to re-assess another of the central concepts of postcolonial theory—the role of the nation state. As materialist critiques of postcolonialism point out, it is too premature to proclaim the decimation of the nation state and myopic to celebrate the cultural carnival of a borderless world, when the nation state continues to play a significant role in the global world. Like the figure of the marginal, the concept of the nation state too becomes central to both pro-globalization and anti-globalization discourses. Thus, while on the one hand scholars like David Harvey and Pheng Chea assert that though globalization creates the facade of the permeation of the borders of the nation state, it plays a central role in neoliberal globalization and has not been rendered as an obsolete structure in global politics. Simultaneously, Jameson asserts that the “nation state remains the only concrete terrain and framework for political struggle” (65) and is echoed by Timothy Brennan who emphasize the importance of the nation state as a sight of resistance “to secure respect for weaker societies or people” (77) who might be completely annihilated if left at the mercy of the neoliberal juggernaut.

Thus Ania Loomba points out that contemporary postcolonial criticism must engage with a “more detailed, more patient, more accurate representation of the
reciprocal flow of power (economic, social and cultural) between nation states and globalized capitalism” (21). As my readings of the novels in this dissertation show, the postcolonial nation state of India forms the epicenter of the new changes of liberalization. Thus while on the one hand the rhetoric of globalization as an emancipatory force is built on the failure of the nations state like in Adiga’s novel *The White Tiger*, on the other hand the nation state itself plays a proactive role in exploiting and repressing its marginal citizens as an ally to the forces of global capitalism in novels like *The Story of My Assassins* and *Animal’s People*. The nation state very much exists and postcolonial criticism needs to continue its vigilance of the nation state and its new role in the era of globalization. Consequently, a vigilance of the nation state and an exploration of new notions of marginalization require postcolonial criticism to divert its focus on the literature of the ‘local’. The exploration of the phenomenon of globalization in new postcolonial criticism needs to shift its attention from primarily focusing on the literatures of the diaspora and the migrant elite, so rigorously projected through the migrant authors and the migrant protagonists in exile of many of the well known novels of Rushdie, Bharti Mukherjee, Michale Ondatje, Sashi Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Amitav Ghosh, that come to represent the canonical postcolonial literature of India. To understand globalization through postcolonial literature, we must also focus on the literatures by resident Indians and the regional literatures who capture the repercussions of globalization on in the local context of India--for the effects of globalization are not only experienced only by the diasporic migrants but also by the local, static subjects.
whose lives are altered by the forces of globalization though they might not step out of their native places throughout their lives.

**Literature Review and Methodology:**

Having placed my project within the larger discourse of new postcolonialism let me proceed to chart out the trajectory of previous works of literary analysis in the context of globalization. Intending to read postcolonial literature against the material and ideological concerns of neoliberal globalization, my project contributes to the burgeoning field of interdisciplinary cultural and literary studies that focus on how globalization has shaped literature in the contemporary age and the way globalization can become the central discursive point as a paradigm for analyzing individual literary texts of the contemporary age. Though economic globalization as a theoretical paradigm has been well established in the field of comparative literature, its application in English literary studies is quite recent. Some of the significant critical works that use the specific aspects of neoliberal globalization to study contemporary literary texts have been in the context of the American novel. James Annesley’s *Blank Fictions: Consumerism, Culture and Contemporary American Novel* and *Fictions of Globalization: Consumption, the Market and the Contemporary American Novel* both focus on the way recent American writing has responded to and been shaped up by globalization and the economic forces of contemporary capitalism. Similarly Christian Moraryu’s *Cosmodernism: American Narrative, Late Globalization, and the New Cultural Imaginary* studies post-cold war American literature and a changing cultural paradigm against the backdrop of the rising
trends of late twentieth century globalization. In the field of postcolonial literature, Paul Jay’s book *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies* is one of the seminal works that studies English postcolonial literary texts in the context of globalization, mainly through the paradigm of transnationalism. The second section of the book titled “Globalization and Literature” is particularly important in the way it analyzes novels that have gained global recognition—namely *The God of Small Things*, *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*, Desai’s *Inheritance of Loss*, Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* and others through the framework of the global changes that has occurred in the late twentieth century. While attempting to read postcolonial texts in the context of contemporary globalization, Jay also offers an engaging discussion on the relationship between postcolonialism and globalization studies as contending yet allied fields of study.

A similar work that analyses postcolonial literature, particularly from South Asia, through the paradigm of cosmopolitanism and globalization is Bishnupriya Ghosh’s *When Borne Across: Literary Cosmopolitics in the Contemporary Indian Novel*. Ghosh explores the globally well known Indian writers of English like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Chandra, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, and Arundhati Roy and studies their impact as representative Indian fiction in the literary global market. As she studies how the various themes of globalization like migration and cosmopolitan identity get represented in the texts, she also probes deep into analyzing these texts as literary products for consumption in the geopolitical locales beyond the ones where the text is originally produced and the localities that are represented. Consequently, she proposes a new mode of literary studies and places the analysis of the texts in the present era of
globalization. A recent contribution to this field has also been made by Liam Connell and Nicky Marsh’s edited volume *Literature and Globalization: A Reader* which takes up important issues of contemporary globalization in the readings of literary texts. The essays in the book focus on five crucial areas of globalization—global politics, environmentalism, technology and cyber-cultures, migration and labor, and cosmopolitan citizenship—and contribute, as book itself proclaims, to “the framing, narrating and recording some of the varied ways in which literary studies has approached the heterogeneous discourses of globalization” (1). Similarly, several other works—like Claudia Sadowski-Smith’s *Border Fictions; Globalization, Empire and Writing on the Border*, Helen C. Scott’s *Caribbean Women Writers And Globalization: Fictions of Independence*, Rebecca Walkowitz’s *Immigrant Fictions: Contemporary Literature in the Age of Globalization*—make significant contribution to the burgeoning field of analyzing literature through the lens of contemporary globalization.

My work makes an important contribution in this field in two ways: Firstly, this project is the first full length study of contemporary literature in the context of post-liberalization India, a nation that has been in the crux of both the new global world order as well as postcolonial studies. The liberalization of India triggered a wide range of socio-economic-political changes that are representative of the colossal effects of globalization in the global South and the way it reshapes the erstwhile postcolonial and developing nations. Consequently, the new literary developments in Indian literature are significantly representative of the new trends in postcolonial literature that respond to the power dynamics of globalization and project important discourses on the ideological
underpinnings and socio-economic consequences of neoliberal globalization. Thus, studying Indian novels through the paradigms of globalization entails a significant endeavor in understanding the new direction of postcolonial literature and the way the global south (or to controversially call it the ‘third world’) responds to the forces of global capitalism. Secondly, unlike many previous projects that take into account the transnational experiences of globalization, my project is specifically focused on the effects of globalization on the ‘local’—that is the space within the boundaries of the geopolitical nation state of India. Thus, instead of looking at the issues of migration, hybridity and diasporic communities—which are the most commonly discussed paradigms of literary studies of globalization—I look at economic globalization in the context of what it does to the nation state itself and the ways it reshapes and realigns the local geographies, the local societies and the local populations. The novels I analyze in this project are all narratives of the ‘local’ India affected by global forces, specifically portraying the socio-economically marginalized people who have never migrated beyond the ‘local’ boundaries of their nation state and yet whose lives are inextricably influenced and controlled by the forces of globalization, which come to them.

In terms of methodology, I analyze the select novels through three main critical frameworks—neoliberalism, urban studies and eco criticism—that cogently correspond to the three central issues of contemporary globalization—namely the dynamics of neoliberal ideology, the restructuring of the urban space and the environmental debates of globalization. The use of neoliberalism as a critical framework for literary analysis has been an increasingly significant trend in contemporary literary studies in the analysis of
the recent fictions of the late twentieth century. Recent scholars have often tried to understand the themes and contexts of contemporary literature in the ways it embodies or responds to the ideology of neoliberalism. A seminal work in this field is Michael Clune’s book *American Literature and the Free Market 1945-2000* that reads American Post-World War II fiction in the context of the free market and the economic changes that reshaped the nation and the world. Clune identifies a new genre in postwar U.S. literature that he terms as the “economic fiction,” a “genre of aesthetic works in which the market organizes experience” (25). Subsequently he reads a wide range of texts from the novels of Philip Roth to rap music to analyze how the influence of the market has shaped the fictional worlds and themes of identity in these cultural texts.

Similarly, Walter Benn Michael reads the specific characteristics of the “neoliberal novel”, that seems to portray a world where there are “only the individuals and their families” and where “cultural difference” is substituted for “class difference,” whereby economic inequalities are summarily veiled. Again, Robin Goodman and Kenneth Saltman’s *Strangelove or How We Learn to Stop Worrying and Love the Market* attempts an insightful study of the multiple ways neoliberal values are disseminated through education, popular media, public discourses and literature. Closely reading literary works like Keri Hulme’s *Bone People* and Ana Castilo’s *So Far From God*, Goodman and Saltman show how the novels problematically celebrate the corporatization of the natural resources and erasure of the sense of community. Similarly, scholarly works like “*Market Corrections: Jonathan Franzen And The” Novel Of Globalization*” by James Annesley, “*Neoliberal Noir: Contemporary Central American Crime Fiction as*
Social Criticism” by Milos Kokotovich, Gillian Harkins’ *Everybody’s Family Romance: Reading Incest in Neoliberal America*, “The Return of the Referent in Recent North American Fiction: Neoliberalism and Narratives of Extreme Oppression” by Jane Eliott, *Money, Speculation And Finance In Contemporary British Fiction* by Nicky Marsh, and other works such as these, all read literary texts through the paradigm of neoliberalism. In my project too, I analyze how contemporary Indian novels like Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger* and Vikas Swarup’s *Q&A* reflect specific traits of neoliberal ideology and weave it in the novels’ fictional worlds.

Along with invoking neoliberalism as a critical framework for my project, I also explore the novelistic representation of the neoliberal city and the peripheralization of the urban poor through an interdisciplinary framework of urban studies. I take my cue from the field of interdisciplinary literary analyses that uses theories from the sociological and particularly geographical insights about the city from the field of urban studies, and apply them to the study of the urban space within the novels. Significant among such works are Gerd Hurm’s *Fragmented Urban Images: The American City in Modern Fiction*, Sharon Marcus’ *Apartment Stories*, *London Narratives: Post-War Fiction And The City* by Lawrence Alfred, *City Fictions* by Amanda Holmes, *Other Cities Other World: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age* by Andreas Huyssen, Philips C Abbott’s essay “Cyberpunk Cities: Science Fiction Meets Urban Theory” and a recent upcoming contribution in the field of postcolonial studies—Salman Rushdie’s *Cities: Reconfigurational Politics and the Contemporary Urban Imagination* by Vassilena Parashkevova. Along the same line, I use various interdisciplinary insights on the
construction of the neoliberal city from eminent urban studies scholars like Edward Soja, Andrew Mitchell, Jason Hackworth, Neil Brennar, David Harvey, Jamie Peck, Roy Coleman and others, as well as Indian urban sociologists like Nandini Gooptu, Gautan Bhan and Aditya Nigam, to analyze the various representations of the post-liberalization modernizing Indian cities. I look at two metropolitan cities as represented in the novels—Delhi and Mumbai—and explore how neoliberal policies of urban modernization have redrawn the boundaries of the city space to privilege the ‘productive’ elites and have imposed disciplinary methods to control the urban poor.

Finally, I also concentrate on the critical framework of postcolonial ecocriticism to analyze one of the most important debates of globalization: the issue of the environment. Attempting a cusp between understanding literary representation of the environment through the paradigms of postcoloniality, postcolonial ecocriticism, a term coined by Graham Huggan, refers to a way of literary analysis, rather than a “a specific corpus of literary and other cultural texts” (Postcolonial Ecocriticism 13). It is a literary analysis that works towards “confirming an environmental ethic that sees ‘environmental justice, social justice, and economic justice [not as dissonant competitors] but as parts of the same whole (Curtin 7)’ ” (Huggan 13). As De Loughrey and George B. Handley point out, though postcolonial ecocriticism is primarily conceived as a postcolonial response to the problematic meta-narrative of earlier ecocriticism and global environmentalism—which are “institutionally and epistemologically” centered in the United States and the United Kingdom(136)—it does not merely widen the lens to include the previously “overlooked geographical regions, historical experiences, cultural perspectives and
concepts of race, class and gender” (136). Rather, Loughrey and Handley assert, “postcolonial ecritics question the very notion of what constitutes as ecological crises” (136), and the politics and power structures behind them. Thus, arguing that an ecritical approach is indispensable to postcolonial/globalization studies, a seminar course on postcolonial ecriticism aptly sums up the connection:

That argument might run as follows: Ecriticism provides a broader grasp than a merely sociological, political, and economical analysis, as it focuses on the environmental foundations of the global economy. Ecriticism pushes the inquiry into postcolonial issues such as race and sexuality to even more fundamental questions about speciesism, reprocentrism, and the relation between the human and the more-than-human world. In addition, ecriticism argues that a radical critique of the (post)colonial and of globalization can specifically be found in artistic and literary revisions of the imagination of the environment. (“Eco-Poco”)

Consequently, postcolonial ecriticism has been an important method of analyzing the literature of globalization, especially in terms of understanding how multinational corporations influence the environment of the global south, how globalization has affected the marginal communities with subsistence based livelihoods, and how neoliberalism and projects of ecotourism reshape the natural world and people’s relationship to it. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin’s book *Postcolonial Ecriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* constitutes a seminal work in the field, contributing to both theoretical and literary discussions on the efficacy of postcolonial ecriticism as a
crucial critical framework for contemporary literature. Other significant scholarly works that explore the themes of globalization in literary works through the framework of postcolonial ecocriticism include Laura Wright’s book *Wilderness into Civilized Shapes: Reading the Postcolonial Environment* where she reads changes brought by colonialism and globalization through the lens of the environmental in postcolonial novels like Zakes Mda’s *The Heart of Redness* and Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *Petals of Blood*. Similarly, other works include *Paradise Discourse, Imperialism, and Globalization: Exploiting Eden* by Sharae Deckard; essays like “Articulating a World of Difference: Ecocriticism, Postcolonialism and Globalization” by Susie. O Brien; edited volumes like *Postcolonial Studies and Ecocriticism* by Anthony Vital and Hans-Georg Erney; *Postcolonial Green Environmental Politics and World Narratives* by Alex Hunt and Bonnie Ross; a dissertation by Hans-Georg Erney, *Titled Modernity And Globalization In Contemporary Literature: A Postcolonial-Ecocritical Approach*. In a similar way, I read the novels like Indra Sinha’s *Animal’s People* and Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* through a postcolonial eco-critical paradigm to explore the effects of globalization on environment and people of contemporary India.

This dissertation thus places itself in this burgeoning field of ‘new’ postcolonial literary studies that seeks to address the concerns of neocolonialism and economic globalization in the non-Western postcolonial nations of the peripheries of global South. While this project invokes the core concepts of postcolonialism of power and marginality, it situates the discussions in the context of a new system of transnational, decentralized power as well as new conditions of marginality shaped by new
manifestations of the nation state, new definitions of model citizenship, transforming socio-political milieus, restructuring of the urban spheres, new modes of social control and changing environmental conditions in a post-liberalization metamorphosing India. Consequently, seeking to read contemporary postcolonial literatures that focus more on the materialistic debates of globalization than just the classical postcolonial issues of culture, identity, and hybridity, my dissertation engages with new critical frameworks of interdisciplinary research, especially borrowing from the social sciences and globalization studies for literary analysis.
CHAPTER 2

The “Homo Economicus”: Rags to Riches Stories and the Self-Made Man

The novel of social mobility was once a trademark of American fiction. Perhaps its transfer overseas is to be expected, but when India—the traditional home of a hidebound caste system—steps forward as the setting of a grand contemporary rags-to-riches story, the implications are clear. Even the world of fiction, it seems, is flat.

Ted Gioia, “Review of The White Tiger”

Ted Gioia, in his review of The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga, points out the new and significant trend in Indian novels in English to showcase stories of a protagonist’s rise from extreme poverty to immense financial success. In the recent novels of Aravind Adiga, Vikas Swarup and Rakesh Wadhwa, Indian literature has found its own versions of the rags to riches stories that resemble the novels of Horatio Alger and themes echoing the “American Dream” of social mobility. Thus, novels like The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga, Q&A by Vikas Swarup and Deal Maker by Rakesh Wadhwa all tell stories of protagonists hailing from the lowest sections of society, struggling with their poverty and for survival, and then miraculously climbing up the socio-economic ladder to wealth and prestige. As all of them rise from poverty to prosperity using new prospects brought in by the liberalization of India, the stories of their success resonate with the rhetoric of “India
Shining”—the fantasy of a prosperous India that offers in a variant of the American Dream, opportunities for one and all to make it big in the new globalized India. Yet, the onus of this prosperity also depends on the ambitious protagonist himself, who must strive to rise above his inherited class by perseverance and by “educating himself in the laws of capitalism” (Kaye 5). Thus, as Alger’s rags to riches novels have often been read as signifying the tenets of capitalistic notions of success and the self-made man circulating in the American society in the 19th century, the new trend of rags to riches story in the Indian fiction can also be interpreted through the ideologies of global capitalism and the concept of the ideal neoliberal subject propagated in the current context of globalization.

In this chapter I read The White Tiger and Q&A through the paradigm of neoliberal subjectivity. Using Foucault’s concept of the “homo economicus,” or the

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21 “India Shining” was the slogan of Bharatiya Janata Party’s election campaign for 2004 that projects India’s economic success under BJP’s vigorous promotion of neoliberal policies. As Parwini Zora and Daniel Woreck point out “The flavour of the promotion is indicated by one poster, which featured smiling women in yellow saris playing cricket and the slogan “you’ve never had a better time to shine brighter”. A number of commentators have pointed to the glaring and obvious gulf between those well-off Indians and the vast majority of the population who are mired in poverty and lack access to the most basic services”.

economic man that he theorizes in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, I argue how these marginal protagonists of the novels personify Foucault’s concept of the ideal economic man of the neoliberal system, who is both an entrepreneur and a consumer. Subsequently, I also study the essential traits of ideal neoliberal subjectivity—such as self-care, self-responsibility, fierce individualism, a rejection of the community, potential to manipulate their surroundings, exceptional entrepreneurial skills, risk management and often ruthless methods of success—and argue how both the protagonists, Balram and Jamil, become ideal poster-children for the rhetoric of the leveling powers of the free market.

Consequently, this chapter also focuses on the globalization of the British and American reality TV and the way it disseminates ideas of neoliberal subjectivity through the pattern of its shows and the participants. Borrowing chiefly from media study scholars like Ouellette and Hay, and Brenda Weber, I analyze how Swarup’s *Q&A* not only invokes the familiar rhetoric of reality TV in his novel, but also derives from reality TV a model of neoliberal subject who redefines the modes of existence in a post-globalized neoliberal world.

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**The White Tiger and the Self-Made man:**

Published in 2009, *The White Tiger* by Adiga continues the legacy of India’s success at the Man Booker Prize Awards. Born in Chennai and raised partly in Australia, Adiga is the fifth Indian author to win the Man Booker Prize after V S Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai who won the prize in 1971, 1981, 1997 and 2006 respectively. Part of this success derives from a continuous fascination of the
Booker Prize jury with India; *The White Tiger* being the ninth novel on India or Indian identity to earn the Booker. Yet, what attracted the panel of judges to *The White Tiger* was not the familiar idyllic and exotic image of India, so commonly found in other Booker award books like Roy’s *The God of Small Things*, but rather the darkness of the Indian underbelly.\(^{23}\) As Michael Portillo, the chairman of the judges, explained: “*The White Tiger* prevailed because the judges felt that it shocked and entertained in equal measure. ‘The White Tiger’ presented "a different aspect of India" and was a novel with ‘enormous literary merit’”. The Booker Prize homepage lauds the novel as a moving “tale of two Indias: Balram’s journey from [the] darkness of village life to the light of entrepreneurial success” (ibid). *The White Tiger* thus gathers international acclaim for its ‘realistic’ portrayal of the Indian underbelly—the extreme oppression that the socio-economically marginalized face in the hands of the people who retain power through the still existing caste system, the Indian bureaucracy and an ineffective government, so much so that the poor take up crime for their survival. Yet, *The White Tiger* is not a moving tragedy of the protagonist pushed to crime by an unjust society; rather, it is a celebration of his post-crime success and the freedom gained through his self-entrepreneurship based on the tenets of neoliberal growth. Adiga scathingly reveals the multiple oppressive structures of Indian society and puts forward a neoliberal agenda.

The central theme of *The White Tiger* thus depicts the spectacular success story of a stock

\(^{23}\) Reportedly, Adiga had a tough competition from the top contender Sebastian Barry, who was leading the odds in the bookmakers’ assessment.\(^{23}\) The other contenders on the list were equally well known names: Amitav Ghosh (*Sea of Poppies*), Linda Grant (*The Clothes on Their Backs*) and Philip Hensher (*The Northern Clemency*).
low class, low caste man who can find liberation in the new India transformed by economic globalization, only by conforming to the notions of an ideal neoliberal citizen.

_The White Tiger_ is a novel in the epistolary form and is set in the current backdrop of post-liberalized India. The story begins with a letter from a self-made Indian entrepreneur, Balram Halwai, who narrates the story of his own success to the Chinese Premiere. With China and India emerging as the new economic superpowers, Balram appeals to an alliance between the “the yellow man and brown man” (4), asserting that the erstwhile master, the “white skinned man,” (4) has already wasted himself and no longer holds power in the new world economy. Through the letters Balram narrates his life in retrospect, narrating how he rose from humble origins to spectacular entrepreneurial success. Born in a poor family in a backward village, he grows up in extreme poverty and deprivation; he is not allowed to complete his education and is employed as a child labor in a local tea stall. Running away from his village, Balram seeks a job in the city and finds one at his erstwhile village landlord’s house, who has now moved to the city. A major part of the novel depicts Balram’s life as a servant cum driver at the household of his former landlord, and the kind of exploitation and class difference that exists between the rich masters and their poor servants. Consequently, in an urge to escape his situation and enjoy the luxuries of life available to the rich, Balram kills his employer, robs his money and finally finds a new successful life of entrepreneurship in the hub of India’s globalization—the city of Bangalore. Balram’s story is particularly a narrative of India’s neoliberal success, specially the success of call centers and outsourcing of labor from India in the IT sector, which have produced a boom for the middle class service sector.
and sprouted a number of self-made business entrepreneurs like him. However, though the story starts in Bangalore, India’s leading IT hub or what Balram calls as the “world’s center of Technology and Outsourcing,” the central narrative focuses on Balram’s passage from a small North Indian village to the center of Bangalore as a journey from the ravages of poverty and oppression to the freedom of wealth, thus projecting Balram as a self-made man who took up responsibility for his own welfare. Intelligent, determinate and ruthless, Balram Halwai is a testimony to the success of what Foucault calls as the “*homo œconomicus*” or the economic man who is driven thoroughly by self-interest and embodies almost a total rejection of the community. Thus to understand Balram and his mantra for success, it is important to gloss over the concept of neoliberal subjectivity, cogently theorized by Foucault through the figure of the “*homo œconomicus*”.

One of the most interesting and over reaching effects of neoliberal globalization has been seen in the realm of the individual subject. “Neoliberalism…has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in and understand the world.” (Brief History 3)—comments David Harvey, asserting the way neoliberalism has moved on from being just a group of economic policies to a way of life that restructures the earlier social and individual identities of the citizens into a new mode of neoliberal subjectivity. As Wendy Brown asserts, neoliberalism as an ideology seeks an “extension of economic rationality to formerly non-economic domains and institutions” that extends to “individual conduct, or more precisely, prescribes citizen-subject conduct in a neo-liberal
order” (46). Foucault’s *The Birth of Biopolitics* is one of the early theorizations on the ideal neoliberal subject who is conceived as, what Foucault calls a “*homo œconomicus*”, an “entrepreneur of himself”: “being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of his earnings” (226). Foucault’s concept of the “*homo œconomicus*” has its genesis, as Foucault points out, in classical liberalism where he is the “man of exchange” (147), embodying what can be called a subjectivity based on interests of utility. In neoliberalism, the “*homo œconomicus*” is re-conceptualized as essentially a consumer who is also an entrepreneur of himself. Foucault explains dual role of the “*homo œconomicus*”, drawing a significant parallel between consumption and production in neoliberalism: “we should think of consumption as an enterprise activity by which the individual, precisely on the basis of the capital he has at his disposal, will produce something that will be his own satisfaction” (226). In a later lecture, Foucault dedicates a longer discussion on the figure of the “*homo œconomicus,*” extending the significance of the “economic man,” beyond the realm of economics to the domains that are not primarily or directly economic and theorizes on the more pervasive domain of the subject’s “rational conduct” (269). 24 Foucault lists the essential characteristics of the “*homo œconomicus*” in clear terms— the “*homo œconomicus*” is someone who “pursues his own interest”; he is also someone who is an active participant in the market, willingly acting in his own self interest and yet is governed by the

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24 Though governable, the “*homo œconomicus*” is however not coerced into the market. Rather the central premise of the economic man is based on the assumption that a rational human would always make decisions in his own interest, which will in turn convert into collective benefits for the market (Foucault 269-272).
“invisible hand” (278) of the market forces. As neoliberalism takes over, the “*homo œconomicus*” becomes the model citizen of the new world order.

It should be noted that a significant difference between liberalism and neoliberalism is manifest in the way neoliberalism considers everyone as a potential subject for the market. As Hai Ren aptly sums up this change: “This neo-liberal conception of conduct has extended the constitution of the liberal subject (the bearer of liberty as rights and responsibilities) from the traditional bourgeois individual (represented by an educated, middle-class, male, European, and white) to the ordinary person (any education level, any class, any gender, any sex, any ethnicity, and any race)”.

Thus, as Ren goes on to explain, while the liberal subject had not applied to the marginalized, the poor, the excluded, and the non-Western other, in contemporary neo-liberal situations, the concept of subjectivity extends beyond the traditional bourgeois white male to encompass those subjects who were not previously treated as citizens. Thus the immense significance of the notion of “*homo œconomicus*” thus lays in the way neoliberalism tries to co-opt all citizens as the ideal subject for the market.

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25 Foucault’s conceptualizes the forces of the market through Adam Smith’s notion of the “invisible hand” (278) whereby the “*homo œconomicus*”, by working towards his own self-interest ends up benefitting the entire economy through a larger system of invisible and unfathomable market forces. Significant in this model is not only the emphasis on the individual unit of the economic system, that is the consumer-citizen-entrepreneur, but also the movement from the sovereign modes of state power to the non-sovereign power of the market.

26 Ren adds in a footnote: “In Britain, for example, the bearers of the liberal mode of conduct were limited to those who maintained liberty as “rights” and “responsibilities.” The liberal subject was “middle-class male, individual, not Irish, not black, not female” because the white male bourgeois individual was the only subject who could be “rational, disciplined, and self-sufficient.” Also see Richard E. Lee, *Life and Times of Cultural Studies*, p. 63.
Adiga’s Balram Halwai is an ideal “homo economicus” in many ways, primarily because he embodies one of the most important characteristics expected of the neoliberal subject—the awareness of self-responsibility. Balram is essentially a self made man—“a thinking man” and “an entrepreneur” (3)—who has taken the onus of his own life. He is neither formally educated—thus his “half-baked” (9) schooling has nothing to contribute to his success—nor has he inherited a fortune that secured his future. Instead, whatever he has achieved in terms of financial success is his own doing and the result of his taking responsibility for himself in turning himself to an entrepreneur on his own. Thus, as he proudly proclaims, he is an example of self-taught entrepreneurship “born, nurtured and developed” (4) from the scratch.

This concept of self-responsibility is essential to the notion of the ideal “economic man”. Foucault argues that the neoliberal logic sees the body as a “human capital” (221), the potentials of which the bearer (the human individual) is expected to explore in order to participate in the growth of capital. The duty is thus on the individual subject who must assume responsibility for himself and his own well-being and act as an active consumer-entrepreneur in the economy. Similarly, Hursh points out that “neoliberalism perceives of and promotes the individual as an autonomous entrepreneur responsible for his or her self, progress and position” (115). Consequently, the neoliberal subject should stop depending on other agents for his well being and act on his own. He is one with a fierce sense of self-care, who remains independent and assumes responsibility for himself as well as manages his own risk, one “who can survive in an uncertain and individualized world by learning how to calculate…(it) requires the
adoption of suspicious disposition and a calculative rationality” (Dahlberg and Peter Moss 21). The rhetoric of the self-responsible individual is also based on a concurrent rhetoric of what Nikolas Rose calls as the “power of freedom” for the individual who, endowed with autonomy, exerts the capacity to make rational choices for himself-herself (223). Consequently, this idea of freedom is associated with concepts of identity and rationality whereby freedom is seen as autonomy of the individual to make his own rational choices, without being thwarted by the state. Rose sees this autonomy as an extension of the old free market skepticism over the powers of government which came to be seen as limiting the freedom of the autonomous, rational individual. The rhetoric of self responsibility is thus intricately connected with the notion of controlling states, whereby the rational individual should be free to choose and hence be the master of his own destiny, with minimal or no intervention of the state.

Balram’s notion of self-sufficiency, however, needs to be seen in the context of the Indian state and the unique dynamics the citizens and the government of India share. Balram’s self sufficiency is a direct critique of the state and an alternative recourse taken because the state has failed in its duties to protect its citizens. Unlike the Western capitalistic societies, the neoliberal propaganda of self-responsibility in the Indian context

27 The problem with this choice is that it is ultimately limited, since the autonomous individual is expected to make a choice or inevitably ends up in making a choice in favor of the market. Subsequently, the trope of self-responsibility, as Lemke points out, tries to achieve congruence between “between a responsible and moral individual and an economic-rational individual... It aspires to construct responsible subjects whose moral quality is based on the fact that they rationally assess the costs and benefits of a certain act as opposed to other alternative acts”.

is not based on the rhetoric that the individual must be free from the constraints of the interventionist state, but rather derives from the issue that the welfare state has failed to intervene and ‘provide’ for its dependents. Thus, contrary to the Western concept of individualism, the Indian socio-political model is primarily based on the expectation of welfare and an increased affirmative intervention from the state to protect its citizens, especially the marginalized sections. As Aradhana Sharma points out, the Indian state “through its self appointed duty of developing the nation and its populist slogans like garibi hatao (remove poverty) and roti, kapda ar makaan (food, clothing and housing) promises to provide for the basic needs of the poor” (132). These promises are enmeshed in the electoral politics of India and the state is expected to fulfill them. Sharma’s assertion is supported by Vivek Rai, a New Delhi based civil servant whom she interviews, and who, after having worked at the grass-root level of the Indian administrative system, confirms this model of dependency of the poor on the state’s support. Rai points out the various types of “dole system” that the government initiated for the poor, which encouraged the “mai baap” (literally means mother and father) syndrome of looking up to the state as a parent figure to be “set in motion from the erstwhile Mughal and British regimes” (qtd in Sharma 131). Consequently, he asserts, the poor people looked upon “the state as their “mai-baap” or father and mother and expected the state to take care of them (ibid). This unique relationship between the Indian state and its citizens points to India’s feudalistic past where the notions of the protectionism of the kings and the loyal submission of the common people in return have carried on as a norm in the post-independence nation state as well.
This model of India, as primarily a welfare state, dates back to the post-Independence governance policies formulated by Jawaharlal Nehru. In spite of its conceptual ingenuity, Nehru’s model of state-led national development failed in its execution especially in addressing the concerns of the socio-economically marginalized. Criticism of the state ran high after the failure of the third planning commission, with Indira Gandhi’s autocratic state control during the Emergency, which fanned more of the anti-state discourse. This anti-state rhetoric was particularly evident in popular culture and literature, whereby the corrupt politician, the bribe taking policeman and the greedy businessman became the stock characters of numerous Bollywood movies.

Simultaneously, the Indian novels like Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children, Rohinton Mistry’s A Fine Balance, Sashi Tharoor’s The Great Indian Novel, O.V. Vijayan’s The Saga of Dharmapuri and others scathingly attacked the state, especially under the period

28 Addressing an India still staggering from the ravages of colonialism, lack of resources, and a large population of disparate people who have never had any experience in democratic voting, Nehru adopted a model of democratic socialism in which the government proposed to take over the responsibilities of economic development. This model aimed at using a socialist intervention of the state as a means for ameliorating poverty and generating economic growth without undermining the powers of democracy. As Om Prakash Misra points out, Nehru’s vision was “very much enthusiastic for making necessary arrangements for education, sanitation, health, skill formation, recreation etc for the huge population of India” (105).

29 The anti-state sentiment was fanned by Indira Gandhi’s policies which, as Parth J Shah asserts, “changed the focus of planning from state-led growth to state-directed redistribution. The lack of certainty of electoral victory, unlike her father, induced Indira Gandhi to use the machinery of the state for electoral politics. Redistributive populist policies became the norm: nationalisation of banking and insurance industries, subsidies to vote banks defined by caste, class, or religion, licensing of firms and industries, heavy import tariffs and restrictions” (“Evolution of Liberalism in India”)
of Emergency, and its atrocities to the poor. Thus, while Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* refers to the historical event of the cleansing of the Jama Masjid slums in the hands of autocratic state-authorities, Mistry’s *Fine Balance* is a moving tale of protagonists from the untouchable ‘chamaar’ castes whose lives and livelihoods are put at stake by the state directives during the Emergency. The critique of the state has been one of the most consistent themes in Indian literature.

In a similar way, Balram’s narrative also projects a sharp critique of the role of the state but in a different context of the post-liberalization contemporary India. As John Harriss points out, the neoliberal changes in India negotiate with very strong expectations of the responsibility of the state from the “fractious and turbulent electoral democracy” (128) who expect the state to deliver in its duties of supporting the citizens. Consequently, the state becomes the target of criticism in a neoliberal context as well when it fails to provide for its citizens. Balram’s critique of the state is also built on this notion of the state’s role as a provider, whereby he lashes out at the government for failing to implement neoliberal growth in all sections of society, which has lead to a modern India but one that is divided into two halves of the rich and the poor. Balram dismantles the myth of ‘India shining’ by exposing the bleak experiences of oppression and depravation that the under-privileged are forced to live in the modern, neoliberal India. The shopping malls, better amenities, luxury mansions, branded products and consumer goods that represent India’s economic boom after globalization are available only to the upper and the middle classes, while the lower classes lead a more contrasting life of poverty and exploitation.
Many scholars thus read the novel as a critique of post-globalization India and particularly the income disparity that global capitalism has created in India. As Sobhan Saxena asserts: “Just when we thought that the world has raving about the economic miracle of India, a brutal confession by The White Tiger protagonist exposes the rot in the three pillars of modern India—democracy, enterprise and justice—reducing them to the tired clichés of a faltering nation”. On a similar note, AJ Sebastian reads the novel as a narrative of social injustice and economic disparity in India since the neoliberal reforms were introduced in the early 1990s (230). Consequently, asserting its role as social criticism, Peter Logan and et all list the novel as a modern picaresque, whereby the picaro criminal-protagonist Balram projects a caustic social criticism on the notions of right and wrong in modern India, returning us “to a world in which society functions not as an enabling structure for human life and livelihood, but as an oppressive structure or an anarchic chaos that reduces people to the condition of vicious and homeless pícaros” (620). Similarly, Cielo Festino asserts: “This is the way I read Aravind Adiga’s The White Tiger (2008): his critique of the Indian nation, in the age of ruthless global capitalism and technology through a satire of its main beliefs and institutions, that goes from mockery to severe denunciation and reveals, at every step, an honest desire of reform”. Significantly enough, and quite ironically too, Balram’s solution for India’s economic disparity in the age of globalization is the free market itself. It is important to note that Balram’s act of murder itself is an act that marks his transition from a feudalistic system of the traditional Indian state to a capitalistic system of a globalized world. As Lily Want points out:
Gradually, the novel starts breaking the feudal norms when feudal social relations based on mutual loyalty and trust are confronted with capitalist relations which are based on individual ambition, disrespect for traditional notions of duty and distrust. Being at the receiving end of this feudal world, it is Balram who breaks the feudal rules of reciprocal trust and personal obligations but in doing so he participates in the betrayal of the ideals of service, loyalty and obligation that define one’s basic humanity or in his own words “that trustworthiness of servants which is the basis of the entire Indian economy” (*The White Tiger* 175). (74)

*The White Tiger* is thus more a critique of the state than a critique of the forces of neoliberal globalization. For Balram, the onus of the sad plight of the poor solely falls on the government and the state, rather than the market. Balram thus completely absolves the free market for generating any disparity—rather the novel projects the market as a solution for emancipation.

Thus, though set against the context of neoliberal India, Balram’s target of criticism is thus not global capitalism itself, but rather the Indian state and its age old corrupt structures like feudalism, caste system, a dysfunctional bureaucracy, ineffective justice systems and other oppressive structures that have not allowed the benefits of globalization to “trickle down”\(^30\). The novel projects the state as the greatest evil, and not

\(^30\) One of the central precepts of neoliberal economics, the “trickle down theory” asserts that though free market policies promote growth for the top, richer sections of society and economy, the positive effects of their growth will trickle down to the bottom sections as well, benefitting the entire society. Theodre McDonald explains the concept as such: “In theory if one individual suddenly become richer than the rest of the community…everyone will eventually benefit
the forces of neoliberalism, for it is the state that is held responsible for creating impediments in distributing the boons of the great equalizing power of neoliberal globalization, which if allowed to flourish fully, can bring prosperity to even marginal citizens like Balram. Balram’s saga of success and the novel’s stark critique of the socio-political milieu of India closely echo the rhetoric of IMF used to justify globalization’s failures and the responsibility of the developing countries:

Openness to globalization will, on its own, deliver economic growth: Integrating with the global economy is, as economists like to say, a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for economic growth. For globalization to be able to work, a country cannot be saddled with problems endemic to many developing countries, from a corrupt political class, to poor infrastructure, and macroeconomic instability.

Thus, while Adiga’s criticism of the postcolonial Indian nation is justified on many levels, it often eludes how the discourse of the failure of the nation has been subtly usurped by the neoliberal rhetoric. The state thus comes to be critiqued as an ineffectual distributor of resources and a failed provider for the poor, giving way to a justification for the free market system. Consequently, the failure of the state, as an effective distributor of resources and an able provider for the poor, often gives way to a justification for the free market system. The rhetoric is that of a false dilemma: the alternative to a malfunctioning welfare state is often global capitalism. As Aijaz Ahmad observes, in

as the rich spend their money” (11). This notion has been severely criticized, precisely for the logic—as MacDonald points out—“For one thing, in real life such winners often do not spend the money in the community in which they gained it, but salt it away in investments abroad” (11).
“any predominant agrarian Third World society, the essential choice is between effective sovereignty of the people” and an “alignment with imperialism.” The failure of the Nehruvian proto-socialist system, as Ahmad points out, has led to an enthusiasm for integration into the global capitalist economy, which may eventually lead to a military intervention as well (“Compromising Sovereignty”). Thus, the free market rhetoric in India frequently corroborates the mounting frustration of the common people with ‘a sclerotic and corrupt state bureaucracy’ (Lall and Vickers 17) with an alternative logic that privatization is a better mode of allocating resources, especially for the poor. This failure of socialism, as Pathik Pathak asserts, ‘to successfully disenfranchise the poor Indian populace is expressly contrasted with the possibilities for national rejuvenation made available by economic liberalization’ (75). The market thus promises to open up opportunities that the state could not, and that the masses would find emancipation through the private sector. The narrative of Adiga’s *The White Tiger* also closely echoes a critique of the state, and projects a neoliberal rhetoric that the globalized market is a better provider for the poor than the state itself.

As a part of the same critique, a large part of Balram’s autobiographical narrative delineates the failures of the Indian welfare state. Projecting an extreme picture of India’s backwardness, Balram describes his native place, Bihar as the realm of “Darkness”: “India is two countries in one: an India of Light, and an India of Darkness. The Ocean brings light to my country. Every place on the map of India near the ocean is well off. But the river brings darkness to India—the black river” (12). He is clearly hinting at the divide between the more prosperous South Indian states (near the Indian Ocean) and the
poor, Indo-Gangetic ‘BIMARU’ states among which Bihar ranks the worst. Used as an acronym for Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, the BIMARU states are identified as having the poorest Human Development Index.\(^{31}\) Known for their reportedly high poverty rates, corruption, rampant illiteracy, poor living conditions, underdevelopment and the fiercest cases of caste conflicts; the “BIMARU” areas exemplify the worst failure of the Indian nation state.\(^{32}\) Balram narrates the magnitude of the “Darkness” in all its forms: Balram is born in a low-caste family, amidst poverty and extreme backwardness. When his rickshaw-puller father dies of Tuberculosis, a disease specifically caused by poor living conditions, he is pulled off from school and made to work as a child laborer at a local tea stall. Balram caustically slams the all-round underdevelopment of the region: dysfunctional schools where the teachers embezzle the school fund money, malfunctioning hospitals without doctors, and amenities that do not function (16): “Electricity poles—defunct. Water tap—broken. Children—too lean and short for their age, and with oversized heads for which vivid eyes shine, like the guilty conscience of the government of India” (16). However, what most plagues the region is its caste oppression, where the landlords rule as the undisputed masters over the lives of

\(^{31}\) Unfortunately, the name also means ‘sick’ in Hindi, referring to the poor socio-economic conditions and living standards of the people. A recent assessment of MPI (Multidimensional Poverty Index) by the UNDP reports that Eight Indian states, including the BIMARU states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, together account for more poor people than the 26 poorest African nations combined. (“8 Indian States poorer than Africa’s 26 poorest.” The Economic Times, 13 July, 2010.)

\(^{32}\) Though the BIMARU states have made a slow progress from what they were a decade ago, a study by Radhakrishna et all. done in 2006 still show them at the bottom of the Human Development Index (462). [Radhakrishn, Rokkam and et all. India in a Globalising World. Academic Foundation, 2006]
the lower castes. Nicknamed as the “Buffalo”, “Stork”, “Wild Boar” and “Raven” for their greed and lust, the landlords in Balram’s village exploit the poor farmers, extract money and sexual favors from them and even torture them to death (21). The oppressed in return meekly surrender to them in compliance, proclaiming their loyalty to their masters. Significantly enough, the condition of Balram’s village is not exceptional; rather as Blaram claims, his village can stand for any village in this region, where the poor cannot dream of anything better (12-13).

This glaring power imbalance, however, is not only contained in the rural hinterlands still operating under the tenets of feudalism. As the landlords move to the city, they shift the power regimes there, whereby the servants now become the new subordinates. Consequently, though Balram moves to the city, and becomes a driver to his former landlord, the feudal power structures are still retained through his master’s authority over him and his own submission to them. He is thus asked to run several unpaid errands from cooking for his masters to massaging their feet (60), given a minimal pay and a shabby room to stay (57), even framed for the accident his employer commits, and yet is expected to proclaim his unflinching loyalty. As Balram asserts caustically: “The jails of Delhi are full of drivers who are there behind bars because they are taking the blame for their good, solid, middle-class masters. We have left the villages, but the masters still own us, body, soul and arse” (145). Through these examples, Adiga reveals the subjugated life of the poor and the corruption of the state bureaucrats like the Buffalo, who hold the reins of power in all spheres whether be it the village, the city or the entire nation. Subsequently, the state has also failed to deliver its poor citizens.
Balram thus provides a startling picture of the lower strata of the Indian society, who having been denied the basic amenities, rights and education, can hardly hope for a respectable living. With the state having failed to rescue them, what does a subjugated one do in such a situation? Balram’s answer is straightforward—become a self-made, self-responsible entrepreneur. Balram thus echoes the neoliberal rhetoric of self-responsibility with enough conviction: “People in this country are still waiting for the war of their freedom to come from somewhere else—from the jungles, from the mountains, from China, from Pakistan. That will never happen. Every man must make his own Benaras” (261). Subsequently, Balram also exemplifies what Petersen points out as one of the central tenets of neo-liberalism that “calls upon the individual to enter into the process of their own self-governance through the processes of endless self-examination, self-care, and self-improvement” (48). In a process of self-examination about his socio-economic marginality, Balram compares the Indian social system to a “rooster coop,” asserting that the poor Indians are like roosters in captivity, kept ready for butchering—“They see the organs of their brothers lying around them. They know they are next. Yet they do not rebel. They do not try to get out of the coop” (147). Instead of being captivated in the coop, Balram preaches and practices taking responsibility for one’s own self and breaking free of the coop. He doesn’t depend on others to release him, nor does he take responsibility to release the others. As a self-responsible man, he takes responsibility only for his own future and pursues his own ambitions—even if that means making moral compromises like murdering somebody. Describing himself as “the White Tiger/ A Thinking Man and an entrepreneur” (1) Balram thus echoes the tenets of the
ideal economic man—one who earns his own capital by his own methods and displays fierce individualism and a self-centric desire for his own well-being.

Balram’s success however does not come solely from his sense of self-responsibility; rather Balram exemplifies the ideal neoliberal subject in many other ways. One of the most significant skills of the neoliberal entrepreneurial subject is his ingenuity and his ability to exploit adverse situations. The unique manipulative and survival skills of the entrepreneur—whom Carla Freeman calls “neoliberalism’s quintessential actor” (252)—involve “ingenuity”, “self-invention” and most importantly, “adaptation” (261). Balram shows the skills of manipulating his underprivileged situation from his very childhood. Denied a school education—which he says only left some “half-baked ideas” in his head—Balram uses his job at the tea stall to learn about people, educating himself on his own in even an adverse situation. Thus, instead of spending all his time in the menial jobs of the shop, Balram would use his ingenuity to eavesdrop on people’s conversations, and expand his knowledge of the world. Thus, though denied of a proper education and forced to work as a child labor, Balram still manages to make the best of his situation and tries to manipulate it to his advantage. Significantly enough, it is this experience of worldly knowledge, and not a “half-baked” formal education that helps him climb the social ladder. However, the greatest act of manipulation that he pulls off is deceiving his masters with his apparent submissiveness that is naturally expected of his caste towards the landlords. Aware of the power hierarchy between the landlords and himself, he exploits his subordination to put up an act of loyalty and subservience, which
yields him a job and a place in the employer’s good books. Later Balram gloats with self-achievement at his acting skills and asserts:

You should have seen me that day—what a performance of wails and kisses and tears! You’d think I’d been born into a caste of performing actors! And all the time, while clutching the Stork’s feet, I was staring at his huge, dirty, uncut toenails, and thinking…Why isn’t he back home, screwing poor fishermen of their money and humping their daughters? (51)

Balram puts up this act of servitude several other times to please his masters, knowing precisely how to manipulate their ego for his personal gain. Thus, his staged humility gets him a pay raise (55), his charade of being a willing clown makes him his mistress’s favorite man and his flawless performance of humility earns him his master’s trust.

Simultaneously, the “homo œconomicus”, as Foucault asserts, is not only the man of exchange or a simple consumer, he is also the man of enterprise and production (147). Balram’s success in the market economy is prompted by a successful implementation of his entrepreneurial skills and his ability to channel the capital he procures from the murder. Thus, after murdering his employer, Balram masterfully uses the stolen money to build up his own business instead of squandering it in unproductive pursuits. Balram also stands out in making optimal choices as a successful entrepreneur, who can effectively gauze what is best for himself and his profit. This point to a culture where the market determines the norms of existence and success, and a subject’s decision is constructed in and by the market. As Lipman and Hursh point out: “neoliberalism reconceptualizes the individual by expanding on classical liberalism’s faith in the individual as a rational
chooser within market. Under neoliberalism the individual is no longer merely a rational optimizer but conceived as an autonomous entrepreneur” (115) as well. In a similar way, Balram makes successful decisions as an “autonomous entrepreneur” and comes out as a crafty businessman who knows how to tap the market effectively for profit. Thus, with the outsourcing of Indian labor and the call centers on the rise, Balram is quick to identify the potential market of night time cab service for call center employees and dives into the market with expertise. For Balram, globalization holds the potential for a new future in India. He describes the powers of ‘outsourcing’ of capital and labor as follows:

“Everything in the city, it seemed, came down to one thing. Outsourcing…Everything flowed from it—real, estate, wealth, power, sex. So I would have to join this outsourcing thing, one way or the other” (255). Thus, with outsourcing of labor and the call centers on the rise, Balram exploits the new work culture to open a cab service company to serve commuters working at odd hours of the night (which corresponds to daytime in US and Europe).

Again, like an ideal neoliberal entrepreneur, who is necessarily “flexible, multi-skilled, mobile, able to respond to new demands and situation” (Davies 9), Balram also skillfully responds to the demands of his new business. As a master-entrepreneur, he knows how exactly to exploit the system for his own profit. Thus, dealing with a corrupt police system, Balram uses his money to buy off the keepers of law to serve his own interest. True to his speculations, the police bust his rival company and give him a breakthrough in the business (257-258). Besides these entrepreneurial skills, the calculative, self-enterprising neoliberal economic man is also someone, as Aihwa Ong
asserts, who “acquires skill, aptitude and competence to build up human capital” (173). As much he is an entrepreneur of financial capital, Balram is also a crafty manager of human capital. As an employer, his relationship with his employees is one of extreme professionalism, without any sociability. As he describes his relationship with his employees:

Once I was a driver to a master, but now I am a master of drivers. I don’t treat them like servants—I don’t slap, bully, or mock anyone. I don’t insult any of them by calling them my “family”, either. They are my employees, I’m their boss, that’s all. I make them sign a contract and I sign it too, and both of us must honor that contract…When the work is done I kick them out of the office: no chitchat, no cups of coffee. (259)

Thus with Balram we find the ultimate “economic man”—immensely resourceful, capable of self-care and making choices in his self-interest, a positive force in the market and a successful and almost intuitive entrepreneur.

However, along with being an entrepreneur, the “homo œconomicus” is also essentially an enthusiastic consumer. As Foucault points out, the “homo œconomicus” is primarily a “man of consumption,” insofar as he becomes the producer of his own satisfaction (226). Drawing from Gary Becker, Foucault asserts that consumption itself becomes an “enterprise” by which the “individual, precisely on the basis of the capital he has at his disposal, will produce something that will be his own satisfaction” (226). The desire for self-satisfaction thus forms one of the major attributes of the new consumer-citizen. This emphasis on consumerism also makes the “individual compliant to solely
concentrate on earning money, since to lose one’s job, to be without income is to lose one’s identity” (Davies 9). Balram too is strongly motivated towards an active agenda towards self-satisfaction, to earn money for a better consumer life and to gain more purchasing power. For him, the divide between the rich and the poor is primarily marked by the poor man’s inability to participate in the consumption of commodities: the inability to buy foreign liquor, inability to afford expensive white prostitutes, forced to drive someone else’s car instead of one’s own, and be forbidden to enter the shopping malls meant for only the rich. As a servant to his employers, he runs errands for them and fetches their expensive drinks, but craves to enjoy the luxuries for himself: “English liquor, naturally, is for the rich. Rum, whiskey, beer, gin—anything the English left behind…my eyes dazzled by the sight of so much English liquor” (62-64). Similarly, he expresses his dissatisfaction with the cheap prostitute his money can afford and grudges that he is not allowed to enter the shopping mall. As a part of his secret desire for a rich life, he sneaks out to enjoy his employer’s expensive car without their knowledge and longs to own one himself. He thus defines his deprivation solely in terms of his inability to enjoy elite consume products. Consequently, he defines his later success by his increased ability to consume—he could now buy the expensive chandeliers in his house, the “silver Macintosh laptops”, afford girls in five star hotels and own twenty six Toyota Qualises. The success of Balram as the “homo economicus” thus both determines and is determined by his success as a consumer.

Along with being an entrepreneur and a consumer, Balram also embodies the neoliberal “homo economicus” model in his repulsion for social connections. Though
apparently acting in a way that benefits the entire economy, the figure of the “*homo oeconomicus*” is by definition distanced from the domain of the social. In order to be a subject and object of the free market, as Foucault points out, the “*homo oeconomicus*” should pursue his or her own interest and ‘must be let alone” (270). Subsequently, Foucault points out that the economic bonds serve as inimical to the bonds of civil society—that is “the active bonds of compassion, benevolence, love for one's fellows, and sense of community” (270). Thus neoliberalism “constantly tries to undo what the spontaneous bond of civil society has joined together by picking out-the egoist interest of individuals, emphasizing it, and making it more incisive”(302). The rejection of the social relations for the sake of individual economic success constitutes an integral part of the neoliberal system. Neoliberalism thus raises significant ethical questions, for it not only expects individuals to act as a self centered, profit-oriented entrepreneur and consumer, but also because it promotes what Giroux critiques as the new world order in which “citizenship has little to do with social responsibility and everything to do with creating consuming subjects”(15). Having internalized the ideology of the market to the extreme, Balram embodies a menacing product of that creed— he shuns his family, community and every social relationship to the point of expressing violence toward them in order to be a successful neoliberal subject.

Neoliberalism, as an ideology, is essentially an individualistic one. Commenting on the psychological effects of neo-liberalist market, H.E Nafstad asserts that it changes “the social contract between society and the individual in many societies in directions that may be detrimental for the organisation of communities, which historically has been
based on the principles of traditional solidarity and universalism”(313) . Neoliberalism assaults the fundamental ethics of a communal identity, since profit often comes at the cost of rejecting social responsibilities. As Apple and other critics argue, since the neoliberal subject’s survival is no longer dependent on society, he/she does not have the same commitment to the social; therefore skills for “individual survival (ability to earn money, flexibility, competitiveness) replace those essential values of maintaining the social fabric (solidarity, fairness, compassion among others)” (40-41). Neoliberalism thus works on the principle of alienation from the social groups, whereby the neoliberal objective of financial deregulation and an uninterrupted market is achieved primarily through an erasure of political collectives. As Pierre Bourdieu asserts:

The movement toward the neoliberal utopia of a pure and perfect market is made possible by the politics of financial deregulation. And it is achieved through the transformative and, it must be said, destructive action of all of the political measures that aim to call into question any and all collective structures that could serve as an obstacle to the logic of the pure market: the nation, whose space to maneuver continually decreases; work groups, for example through the individualisation of salaries and of careers as a function of individual competences, with the consequent atomisation of workers; collectives for the defence of the rights of workers, unions, associations, cooperatives; even the family, which loses part of its control over consumption through the constitution of markets by age groups. (“The Essence of Neoliberalism”)
The ideal *homo economicus* is thus an isolated individual who is dismissive of his shared existence and is hostile to the community around him.

In a similar manner, Balram also rejects camaraderie with any other social contact. While his relationship with his employers is predictably one of exploitation and counter-manipulation, he also dismisses class solidarity with the fellow servants. Balram is in a constant tussle of power with the two other servants of the household—the older driver Ram Pershad and the gatekeeper; and he strives to outwit them both for his own success. Balram thus plays by the tenets of a ‘neoliberal game of power’—a concept that Cliff DuRand compares with the famous board game of *Monopoly*: “You win by driving them (the opponents) into destitution so they can no longer continue to play. It is a zero sum game; what one wins is at the expense of another. This is a game in which each is to be guided by self-interest alone. Compassion for another player who is not doing well, can simply make you vulnerable to your competitors…But in the free competition of Monopoly there are no permanent friends, only permanent interests”. In a similar manner, Balram exploits his opponents’ weakness to dominate over them. In an incident at his master’s house, Balram threatens to reveal his co-driver, Ram Pershad’s, well guarded secret of being a Muslim and forces him to leave his job while Balram reaps the benefits; the gatekeeper too is blackmailed to submission for hiding the truth from the masters.\(^{33}\)

Thus, instead of forming an alliance with the other servants of the household, Balram eliminates them all and secures his position as the most trusted servant. This apathy to

\(^{33}\) With the Hindu-Muslim divide still quite strong in India, many traditional Hindu households would not allow Muslims within their premises, even as employees.
form alliances characterizes all of Balram’s social interactions, exemplifying what Bourdieu calls as the “moral Darwinism” or the dangerous “cult of the winner” where self-centeredness, cut throat competition and cynicism is the norm of all action and behavior. Thus, while the other employed drivers, who had formed camaraderie among themselves, try to be amicable and take Balram into the group, Balram is immediately repulsed by the possible risks of such association:

Servants need to abuse other servants. It’s been bred into us, the way Alsatian dogs are bred to attack strangers. We attack anyone who’s familiar. There and then I resolved never again to tell anyone in Delhi anything I was thinking. Especially not another servant. (109)

However, it is not only the society of his fellow servants that he shuns; Balram shows extreme detachment from the primary social unit of his family too, almost to the point of dehumanization. He is a man dissociated from any kind of familial relationship or emotional bond. He feels disconnected from his family from his very childhood when bereaved of his mother at a young age, he is detached from the rest of the relatives. Even the tragic death of his father is narrated with utmost emotional detachment, sarcastically highlighting the flaws of the government health care system more than recounting the loss of a parent (40-42). More significantly, the narration of his father’s death is immediately followed by a detailed narration of his brother’s marriage deal and a contented description of all the material gains that followed. Balram writes:

Kishan’s marriage took place a month after the cremation. It was one of the good marriages. We had the boy, and we screwed the girl’s family hard. I remember
exactly what we got in dowry from the girl’s side, and thinking about it even now makes my mouth fill up with water: five thousand rupees cash, all crisp new unsoiled notes fresh from the bank, plus a Hero bicycle, plus a thick gold necklace for Kishan. (42)

Balram promptly shifts from the topic of his father’s death to an almost exalted description of Kishan’s dowry, testifying that nothing excites him more than the prospect of profit and his interest in money. Consequently, in spite of being the only earning member of his family, Balram hates to share any familial responsibility.

For Balram, the family is not only a meaningless burden; he even labels it as the main impediment to individual success and emancipation. As he states: “A handful of men in this country have trained the remaining 99.9 percent—as strong, as talented, as intelligent in every way—to exist in perpetual servitude; ...(for) the Indian family is the reason we are trapped and tied in the coop” (149). Since the oppressors would always destroy the family of the rebel, Balram argues, the poor remains in servitude out of love for the family. It is only someone like Balram, the man without any attachments, who can escape his situation and taste success for himself. Occasionally guilty of the dire consequences that might befall his family for the murder that he has committed, Balram justifies their possible death as good riddance, arguing that the impoverished family thriving on the lowest margins of the society would have been wiped out by the powerful landlord anyway, else they would have had to resort to begging, homelessness and extreme poverty, which is nothing better that being dead (270). The only familial contact he brings along to his new life is his young nephew Dharam, with whom he seems to
grow to bond beyond the motive of financial profit. Yet, in a chilling description, Balram reveals his cold-blooded calculative mind again, asserting that he will not hesitate to kill Dharam if he dares to rebel against him (272). The self-made entrepreneur is thus an epitome of cold-blooded emotional detachment; his sole concern being unhindered capitalistic success only for himself.

The mantra to Balram’s success thus lies in his ability to be alone and to stay apart from the crowd. Christened as the “The White Tiger” in his school, he proclaims his rarity in the ‘jungle’ of men. Thousands of people go through the oppression that he did, yet it is only him that has made it successful in the end. “A The White Tiger keeps no friends,” (302) he thus asserts emphatically; for the neoliberal subjectivity he internalizes is one of extreme self-centeredness and a complete disinterest in anything that calls for being a part of any social group. This aversion for the community as well as the family seems particularly unconventional when taken in the context of the Indian social system, where the family still forms a very important role in an average person’s life. Like many traditional families, Balram’s family too is a joint family consisting of all the blood relatives, staying together under the same roof. Yet Balram is an exception—for neither does he show any eagerness to be a part of his family, nor does he agree to financially contribute to his impoverished family, even after his financial success. As Lily Want observes: “His (Balram) philosophy of social mobility based on productive commercial investments embraces, to begin with, a breach of family duty. In his avidity to rise, family bonds, family allegiance and family obligation cease to have any meaning for Balram now” (75). The implications of this ideology of self-interest look more ominous.
when taken in the context of a whole society, for as Apple and et all explain, they imply “political quiescence, social demobilization” and a loss of the sense of community from which the independent consumer is cut off (41). The rhetoric of individuation is thus a dangerous ideological ploy to isolate the individual from any mode of collective resistance—for the “neoliberal utopia,” as Bourdieu asserts, destroys all political measures and demolishes all collective structures that could “serve as an obstacle to the logic of the pure market”. Thus, collective structures like the nation, which could regulate the market, and the work groups, which could protect worker rights against exploitation, are all reduced to redundancy under neoliberalism. William Tabb sees this shrinking of the “public realm” as the ultimate victory of the capital over labor:

the self confidence with which market ideologists attack any sense of public space, of solidaristic provision of services and shelter from the relentless individualistic values of the market, represents a measure of defeat of democracy. Similarly, devolution of service provision… from the federal to the state to the local levels, and then to the individual procurement based on ability to pay, undermines the limited solidarities which hold society together. These processes have little to do with globalization, and a great deal to do with the victories of capital over labour, and the resulting damage to the rights of citizenship.

Thus, cut off from his social connections, the neoliberal man is not only rendered powerless and more exploitable, since, as Foucault observes, he also becomes a myopic subject of a larger system who ends up contributing more to the neoliberal market. As Foucault argues, the “homo œconomicus” in pursuing his self-interest “function as an
individual subject of interest within a totality that eludes him and which nevertheless founds the rationality of is egoistic choice” (278). This ‘totality’ or invisibility of economic forces—a concept that Foucault derived from Adam Smith’s concept of the “invisible hand” (279)—assures that the more the individual pursues his personal gains, the more he augments the market. Thus, mimicking the neoliberal agenda, Foucault sarcastically exclaims: “Thank heaven people are only concerned about their interests, thank heaven merchants are perfect egoists and rarely concern themselves about public good, because that’s when things start to go wrong” (279). A total rejection of public good, or for that matter any sort of social collectivity, signifies one of the most important characteristic of the ‘economic man.’

The figure of the “*homo œconomicus*” raises more serious ethical questions in terms of conceptualizing criminality within this new economic order. Balram is a criminal in the basic sense of the term—he murders his employer in cold blood, through a violent process and embezzles his money for his own success. Yet he embodies the attributes of the ideal ‘economic man’ and proves himself useful to the market. Adiga’s treatment of Balram is almost amoral in tone, and concluding assertion of Balram’s ultimate freedom through his actions in a way on celebrates his success in spite of his criminality. To understand the notion of amorality associated with the “*homo œconomicus*”, it is imperative to discuss the notion of criminality in neoliberalism, as Foucault discusses it in *The Birth of Biopolitics*. Foucault points out the interesting conflation of the penal system and the calculations of the economy in the eighteenth century, in which “the mechanism of the law, was adopted as the economic principle of
Foucault closely studies neoliberals like Gary Becker who analyze the problem of crime situating it within the economic paradigm, and explains how in Becker’s interpretation, crime comes to be defined as an economic pursuit: “crime is that which makes the individual incur the risk of being sentenced to a penalty” (251). For Foucault, Becker’s definition of crime under neoliberalism signifies a shift in point of view of seeing crime from the position of the individual criminal subject, rather than the larger structures of penalization. Foucault thus points out how the figure of the criminal is thus conflated with the “*homo œconomicus*”, making the criminal a fundamentally ‘economic man’:

> So we move over to the side of the individual subject by considering him as “*homo œconomicus*”, with the consequence that if crime is defined in this way as the action an individual commits by taking the risk of being ----punished by the law, then you can see that there is no difference between an infraction of the highway code and a premeditated murder. This also means that in this perspective the criminal is not distinguished in any way by or interrogated on the basis of moral or anthropological traits. The criminal is nothing other than absolutely anyone whomsoever. The criminal, any person, is treated only as anyone whomsoever who invests--in an action, expects a profit from it;-and who accepts the risk of a loss. (253)

Consequently, a potential criminal act comes to be seen as essentially an economic decision made by the individual criminal subject. The rationale behind this as a method of crime prevention through the economic grid was that the scale of penalties would be
sufficiently subtle to convince every individual that certain crimes are not worth the risk, for the penalty is too grave than the profit of the crime. The neoliberal merger of the criminal subject, or the *homo criminalis*, with the “*homo œconomicus*” signifies far reaching connotations. The merger signifies a dissociation of the paradigm of morality in conceptualizing the criminal subject under neoliberalism, whereby the criminal subject is driven not by ethics or morality but rather by purely economic motives. The amorality of criminality, in return ascribes the ‘successful’ criminal an ideological absolution from his crimes, since he has been able to act in accordance to his best interests and has successfully reaped a profit from it. It is this very amorality that resounds in Adiga’s novel as well. Balram as a criminal gets somewhat redeemed precisely because he succeeds as an ‘economic man’. Being conceptualized through the economic grid, Balram’s crime ceases to be a deplorable act under neoliberal regime, precisely because Balram does not suffer any economic loss in the process. The question of criminality in neoliberalism thus poses a crucial problem of ethics, whereby the amoral projection of the criminal subject as a successful ‘economic man’ like Balram becomes considerably problematic.

While on the one hand *The White Tiger* raises serious moral and ethical issues, on the other hand the novel becomes all the more questionable since Balram’s subjectivity is projected through a constructed subaltern agency and as a simplistic emancipatory tool for the immensely complex socio-cultural hegemonies of India. Balram’s story is the success of the marginal subject in a new phase of India brought in by globalization. The novel celebrates the immense possibilities that globalization and the deregulation of the
market has apparently opened up for the poor. Posing himself as the model for a new India, Balram inspires all poor men to find their liberation in the new India:

Haven’t I succeeded in the struggle that every poor man here should be making—the struggle not to take the lashes your father took, not to end up in a mound of indistinguishable bodies that will rot in the black mud of Mother Ganga?

(273)...I’ll say it was all worthwhile to know, just for a day, just for a minute, what it means not to be a servant (276)

Balram justifies his actions as the only resort for resistance left in his state of oppression. It was either to submit to servitude that society had destined for him, or to break out of the coop and embrace the global network, even if that includes murder. The rhetoric he uses is thus essentially one of binaries—old India vs. new India, the feudal oppression vs. the neoliberal liberation, the failed state vs. the successful market. The critique of first one essentially leads to the exaltation of the latter. Balram thus projects a model of an unabashed neoliberal subjectivity and an uncritical exaltation of the free market that is shown to offer immense possibilities for the marginal groups.

On the surface, Adiga’s tongue-in-cheek tone in portraying Balram and his flaws might also facilitate a subversive reading of the text as a satirical narration of the apparent success of neoliberal India. Balram is at once dangerous and ludicrous—his megalomaniac gestures, his futile attempts at mastering English, his repulsive habits and his unabashed description of his violence, makes him a character that is far removed from crying for sentimental sympathy. However, critics like Amardeep Singh point out that this reading of Balram as a caricature “constructed to make a socio-political point about
India's ‘dark side’” is not very convincing, arguing that “this might be a reasonable way to read Adiga's novel, except that as the novel progresses, Adiga grows more and more committed to the character, and Balram becomes less of a darkly comic caricature and more of a realistic anti-hero. *The White Tiger* seems rather non-ironic by the end, and the various cynical one-liners about the hollowness of Indian democracy don't have the bite they should.” Adiga’s non-ironical exaltation of Balram’s freedom at the end of the novel can be read as an exaltation of the neoliberal discourse of capitalistic success. In his interview with Hirsh Sawhney, Adiga initially assumes an apparently critical stand regarding globalization, which he proclaims as “It’s kind of like a shot of sugar—it’s great at first, but it actually has no nutrition”, but quickly asserts that his complaint of globalization is not based on the its debatable methods, but that it doesn’t trickle down to the lower strata: “Outsourcing counts for less than 1% of the economy. I wanted to show that this is a very small part of the Indian economy and the bulk of life is way outside this.” Instead, Adiga’s scorn is mainly directed at the failures of the Indian democracy and not Balram’s means to resolve it:

The book deals with an India smack in the middle of “the boom,” and it challenges a lot of comfortable assumptions about Indian democracy and economics. I want to challenge this idea that India is the world’s greatest democracy.  

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34 When asked if crime is the only way to end the power hierarchy, Adiga even goes on to exclaim: If you don’t have English, an education, or healthcare, then how are you going to do something to transform your life? A poor man in India making 4,000 rupees a month is never going to transform things. The only
In another interview (*BookBrowse*) he overtly hails the hopes globalization has brought in: “The past fifty years have seen tumultuous changes in India’s society, and these changes -- many of which are for the better -- have overturned the traditional hierarchies…There are lots of self-made millionaires in India now, certainly, and lots of successful entrepreneurs.” Again, in a different interview, Adiga markets his book as essentially picturing the contrast between the old India of decay and the new hopeful India—the old “stagnant, largely corrupt system” and the changes that the opening up of the economy brought in 1991, setting in the New India. As the novel progresses, Balram becomes more of a model citizen than a caricature, who is projected as an inspiring tale of subaltern uprising in the new India.

Significantly enough, Adiga projects his manifesto of marginal success with a claim to authenticity, especially of the marginal reality he portrays. Asserting that Balram represents the underbelly of India that Adiga encountered in his own journey through India, Adiga claims the authenticity of the “continuous murmur or growl beneath middle-class life in India” (*Book Browse*) he records in his book. Consequently, the novel gets marketed and is received by the international readers as authentic picture of India and the new possibilities. A cursory look at the reviews on the book reveals the seriousness with which Western readers take this portrayal as an ethnographic account of the Indian underbelly and consequently read Balram’s success as inspiring. These reviews applaud transformation possible is crime for someone like Balram, otherwise he’s going to be surrounded by fantasies, dreams, and not make it out…Often life is so tough you just have to be brutal…What is stopping a poor man from taking to the crime that occurs in Venezuela or South Africa?
the book for success story of the marginal, equating it with an inspiring tale of liberation from injustice. Akash Kapur’s review of the novel on New York Times praises Adiga for his “bare, unsentimental prose” with which “he strips away the sheen of a self-congratulatory nation and reveals instead a country where the social compact is being stretched to the breaking point.” Simultaneously, for Kapur the book’s appeal lies in its manifesto for success: “There is much talk in this novel of revolution and insurrection: Balram even justifies his employer’s murder as an act of class warfare”. Similarly the reviewer for The Economist opines “Balram’s education expands, he grows more corrupt. Yet the reader’s sympathy for the former teaboy never flags.” Thus the reviewer acclaims Adiga for producing a memorable, inspiring character “In creating a character who is both witty and psychopathic, Mr Adiga has produced a hero almost as memorable as Pip, proving himself the Charles Dickens of the call-centre generation.” On a similar note, Lee Thomas of San Francisco Chronicle reviews the novel as a tale of hope for the lower classes: “Names hold particular significance in a country where everything seems to be in the middle of a transformation. The poor finally get a whiff of opportunity, enough to incubate hope”. For reviewer David Mattin from The Independent, the novel is “a thrilling ride through a rising global power.” Many reviewers thus find the novel as a fascinating tale of the ‘realities’ of India and more significantly, a tale of astounding social mobility.

As some of these reviews show, the appeal of the novel lies not only in its depiction of the dark side of India but also in the way it depicts an unprecedented rags to riches story and presents a powerful testimony of Balram’s success in a modern
transforming India. Significantly enough, the importance of Balram’s success in globalized India is also enhanced through Balram’s identity as a marginalized citizen. Balram belongs not only to the low rungs of class hierarchy but also apparently comes from a lower, untouchable caste. He is thus doubly marginalized in terms of his socio-economic standing, and his identity invokes not only the category of class but a much more complex dynamics of caste oppression specific to the context of India. Distinct to the Indian socio-economic structure, the hierarchy of caste denotes a complex hegemony that works independent of class distinctions. Significantly enough, Adiga’s novel echoes the problematic rhetoric of neoliberalism in addressing even complex caste issues in terms of simplified economic problems. Balram’s story thus projects the success of the free market, not only as an emancipatory force for social mobility in terms of class, but also as an ameliorating force for caste oppression as well, which invokes a completely different dynamics. Balram’s caste disparity seems to have vanished as soon as he gains financial success. Yet, contrary to the fictional depiction, the appropriation of the category of caste by the neoliberal rhetoric is a sheer misreading of the basics of caste system, which is a socio-cultural hierarchy derived not from class or relative ownership of wealth, but rather like race, a genealogical categorization of one’s family, organic body and the historical significance of one’s bloodline. The discrimination based on caste therefore places the oppressed individuals on an unequal scale right from the beginning, which cannot possibly be addressed by economic emancipation of the free market alone. As Anand Teltumbde points out the fallacy of emancipation propagated by the neoliberal rhetoric:
Free market basically assumes that seller and buyer in the market are all equal, endowed with equal amount of information and therefore the exchange between them takes place purely on the basis of perceived value of the thing exchanged. Now in a real world, arguably created by the elements of free market itself (that allowed accumulation by some beyond their needs and thereby exercise power over others, both, money as well as informational) this assumption becomes quite problematic. With given inequality of people in marketplace the free market becomes a mechanism of exploitation.

Teltumbde goes on to point out that the retraction of the state has in fact affected the lower castes adversely in terms of the “withdrawal of the state from its obligation towards people and privatization of what was public”, leading consequently to a threat to the human rights guaranteed by the state for the lower castes. With the government playing a less active role in the retribution and reservation programs for the lower castes under neoliberalism, Teltumbde argues, “globalization has damaged comprehensively what could be called as the emancipation project of Dalits”. The projection of neoliberal globalization as a magic elixir that can cure even caste problems is thus not only simplistic but also misleading.

This fallacy, or what Teltumbde calls the “deliberate mischief,” of the neoliberal rhetoric is problematically overlooked in Balram’s story of success. By his background, Balram is a member of a low caste, whose family has long been oppressed by the upper caste landlords. The persecution that Balram’s family and other villagers from the lower strata of society face in the hands of the landlords is a discrimination, as we can assume,
not based solely on class or feudal authority but also caste. Yet, significantly enough, the issue of caste is never explicitly addressed in the narrative. The only information about his caste that we get is he is a Halwai (or the food cooking caste), hence “one of the bottom castes” as Mukesh points out. Though his caste identity gets him a job at the Malhotra’s mansion, the maltreatment he gets from his employer suggests a continued oppression by the upper caste landlords. Balram however never really engages with his caste identity; instead, in an interesting passage, Balram dismisses the paradigm of caste completely as an obsolete structure and instead substitutes it with a class hierarchy: “To sum up—in the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat—or get eaten up” (54). Balram’s rejection of the hierarchy of caste for a more one-dimensional hierarchy based solely on class is problematic not only because it essentializes the ‘problem of India’ into a fallacious, over-simplified economic paradigm, but also because it creates an ahistorical, non-specific, constructed marginal subject who can serve as a model poster-child for the neoliberal rhetoric solely through his economic success. With the complexities of caste overlooked, Balram becomes a simplified and the quintessential marginal figure that can be saved by neoliberal globalization’s economic boons. Thus the merger of the categories of class and caste into one oversimplified category of generic marginalization projects globalization as the miraculous antidote to all forms of social hegemony. The essentialization of the figure of the marginal is something that stands out in Vikas Swarup’s *Q&A* as well, which
projects a similar plot of the rags-to-riches story, embodying an emphatic assertion of neoliberal hope through the cultural phenomenon of the reality TV.

**Q&A and the New Subject of Reality TV:**

Vikas Swarup’s *Q&A* is better known as the novel which inspired Danny Boyle’s academy award winning film *Slumdog Millionaire*. While the film has gained both critical and popular recognition on a global scale, the novel too, has achieved a huge commercial success—winning several global awards and been translated into 37 languages. The novel focuses on the life of the underdog in a post-globalization new India: it is the story of a poor slum boy participating in a reality TV quiz game and winning it by incredible luck and with his experiences of an extraordinarily adventurous life. As the book catches the fancy of international readers as a spectacular tale of an underdog’s success, it is interesting to note how the novel reflects the emerging trends of global entertainment in a changing consumerist society. Based on the premise of a reality TV show, the novel seeks to celebrate the spectacular turn of a generic common man’s life to fame and wealth through the global media and India’s economic liberalization; as well as projects another example of the model of the “*homo economicus*” consumer-citizen who constitutes an ideal subject of the free market ideology.

*Q&A* shares a lot of commonalities with Adiga’s *The White Tiger*. Like Adiga’s novel, the basic plot of *Q&A* remains the same—a slum boy’s accent to immense financial success. Ram Mohammad Thomas, the protagonist of the novel, has been arrested on charges of foul play for correctly answering all the questions in a reality game.
show, roughly modeled on *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*. The whole story is narrated in a flashback mode in which Ram recounts segments of his life to his lawyer Smita, hence explaining how he could successfully answer each question in the game show based on his life’s experiences. The narrative follows an episodic pattern as each chapter narrates a unique experience from Ram’s life that specifically corresponds to the question asked at each stage of the quiz show, and ends with a successful completion of each level of the quiz, giving the novel a thriller like suspense. Swarup asserts that he meant to write a thriller with an exciting story and he cared less about the reality factor of it. Significantly enough, unlike Adiga, Swarup negates the claims of realism and rather redirects the readers to the thrill and inspiring message of the story---the miraculous journey of a common man from poverty to wealth through the medium of a reality show. When asked in an interview with Mark McDonald, from the *New York Times*, if he actually lived in or experienced the slums that life in the slums that he portrays in his book, Swarup replied in negative:

No. None. Because I wasn’t trying for that level of realism. That’s the great thing about fiction. In my invented universe, I make the rules. Google took me wherever I needed to go. Without Google I couldn’t have written the book in two months.

Thus, the slums just provide, as Swarup asserts, nothing more than “the backdrop to the story of the courage and determination of this boy who beats the odds” (ibid). The real appeal of the novel, like Adiga’s *The White Tiger*, rests on its rags-to-riches story of a poor man climbing up the social ladder in a fascinating change of luck. Moreover, like
Balram who benefits from the new opportunities for entrepreneurship that have opened up in post-liberalization India, Ram Mohammad too gets to transcend his inherited socio-economic marginality through another process of the spread of global capitalism, the globalization of the entertainment media.

Swarup’s novel is based on the theme of the reality TV shows, that reflects, as several scholars have often argued, not only the contemporary trends of global media but also essentially embodies the tenets of neoliberal ideology. Laurie Ouellette points out in a seminal essay that reality television has a distinct relationship with neoliberalism, evident from the fact that reality TV “gained cultural presence . . . alongside the neoliberal policies and discourses of the 1990s” (125). Not only that, the characteristic features of reality TV—especially the trend of replacing the labor of paid professional actors by casting unpaid commoners, the focus on surveillance of the common citizen, emphasis on self-interest and winning—has been identified as corroborating the modes of post-welfare state-governance. Indian reality TV shows are directly connected to the economic liberalization of India in 1991, which opened up satellite channels replacing the monopoly of the state owned Doordarshan. It is interesting to note how the narrative of the novel, in terms of its theme, invokes the global phenomenon of the televised media, especially the reality TV shows and many of its aspects that corroborate a neoliberal

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35 Also see Nick Couldry Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics After Neoliberalism, Marwan Crady and Katherine Sender The Politics of Reality Television: Global Perspectives, Gareth Palmer Exposing Lifestyle Television: The Big Reveal.
notion of citizenship. Through three distinct aspects of the novel that echo the reality show model—(i) the projection of the protagonist as a ‘common’ man, (ii) the notion of TV as offering hope for the poor and (iii) the focus on neoliberal entrepreneurial skills in the characters—I argue how Swarup not only invokes the familiar rhetoric of reality TV in his novel, but also echoes the ideology of reality TV on a much deeper level of attempting to redefine the modes of existence in a post-globalization neoliberal world.

Q&A invokes one of the most important aspects of the neoliberal ideology—that is the promise of social mobility for the poor. As Manfred Steger points out the central ideological tenet of neoliberalism—“presented to the public as a central, leaderless juggernaut that will ultimately produce benefits for everyone” its “promises of material well-being and social mobility” are well-publicized (79). Q&A projects a neoliberal premise of social mobility by banking on one of the most revolutionary aspects of reality TV, that is, its focus on the ‘ordinary’ man. Marking a major shift from the scripted sitcom narratives and professional actors, reality TV had turned the spotlight to the common man. Be it the talents searched in the Idol series, the celebrated participants of the game shows like Survivor or Big Brother, or the ordinary people in their ‘real’

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36 Though the term “reality TV show” refers to an enormous array of reality shows televised across several decades, in diverse forms varying across different nations, in this paper I have primarily referred to the popular shows broadcast on the British and American televisions and their adaptations in India. The Star TV aired Kaun Banega Crorepati (Indian version of Who Wants to be A Millionaire) hosted by the megastar Amitabh Bachhan in 2000 was a phenomenal success and opened up a surge of reality shows which now constitute a major genre of programs. However, most reality shows in India have been adaptations/derivations of UK and US shows, out of which the Indian Idol (taken from American idol), Big Boss (Big Brother), Biggest Loser, Zhalak Dikhla Zaa (Dancing With the Stars), have been most popular.
lives videoed on the 70s show *American Family*—reality TV was all about the common man’s entry to the entertainment media. Simultaneously, the reality shows also claim unpredictability through these unprofessional ‘real’ characters who are supposed to operate without a script. With the rise of more interactive audience participation through public voting, the staged ordinariness is meant to appeal to the mass viewers who can instantly identify with their onscreen representatives. Though Su Holmes and Deborah Germyn assert that it is not new for ordinary people to appear on television, and that genres like news, quiz shows, and documentaries have “long since relied upon the role and presence of real people as opposed to media professionals and performers” (113), they also go on to assert that the limited presence of the ordinary people as essentially belonging to the category of ‘ordinary’ in the earlier shows has been radically altered by reality TV which seeks to convert the participants to celebrities (113). The apparent democratizing trends of the reality TV is also observed by Anita Biressi and Heather Nunn who point out the nature of this change in the portrayal of media generated social mobility. As they point out:

> Ordinary people, formerly the sympathetic subjects of social-conscience documentaries have now been transformed into the ‘especially remarkable celebrity’ through their new found media visibility…We consider the increasing premium placed on social mobility achieved not through merit, trained talent or the traditional accumulation of cultural and economic capital but through media visibility alone. (8)
Though Biressi and Nunn rule out the economic aspect of this media visibility, the reality shows affect the contestants economically as well. Thus, while reality TV generates sensationalism through the turning of “ordinary people into marketable celebrity-commodities” (Turner 33), it also projects an alternative form of socio-economic success for the contestants. The post-participation fame that came to the Louds (*American Family*), Carrie Underwood (*American Idol Season 4*), or Melissa Rycroft (*The Bachelor*) exemplifies how reality TV can change the life of the once unheard of common man not only to one of celebrity-hood but also to economic affluence.

This theme of social mobility of the commoner hero marks the central plot of *Q&A*. The novel also plays on this concept of the commoner-turned-celebrity through a reality game show, whose life changes after he participates in a reality TV show. Like Adiga’s ‘marginal’ protagonist, Swarup’s lead character is a generic common man without a historical specificity of caste, religion or ethnic identity. The protagonist is an orphan, thus bereft of any specific family background, and is surprisingly named Ram Mohammad Thomas—a name that carries the most common denominators of a secular identity, since it includes the names of a Hindu god, a Muslim prophet and a Christian missionary. Unlike in Boyle’s film, where the protagonist Jamil is specifically identified as a Muslim and hence represents a particular minority status in terms of both economic and religious marginalization in India, Swarup does not embark on the nuances of identity politics in India at all, especially in terms of religion. Instead Ram is the quintessential common man who stands for all the major religious groups of India and can be identified with any one of them. Simultaneously, Ram is also the generic ‘poor’
man who lives the lives of a variety of poor people found across India— he is at once the child in an orphanage, the street beggar, the vagabond, the waiter, the servant at rich households, the tour guide at tourist spots, the slum dweller. He thus represents the ordinary working class man, who constitutes the majority of the Indian population, and is indistinguishable as a separate entity in the crowd.

In Swarup’s novel, the common man’s ascent to limelight, both as a protagonist of a novel and as the most sought after man in the events of the story, is spurred by his participation in the reality quiz show. Thus on one level, he is sought after by the show organizers and the police who suspect him of fraud; on another level, his extraordinary feat at the show of getting all the questions right spurs a lawyer to take up his case and listen to his story. His narrative opens up his life for the readers as well, offering them a glimpse into the otherwise unheard off, marginal experience. The novel thus projects the apparently democratizing aspects of the reality TV which churns out a new concept of social mobility under the global capitalist media. For Ram Mohammad too, participating in a quiz show marks a bold transgression of his marginal status. Therefore, asserting that his arrest was prompted by his daring act to participate in the quiz show as a slum boy, Ram comments sarcastically at the strict socio-economic hierarchies in India and the status quo the poor is not supposed to transgress:

There are those who would say I brought this upon myself. By dabbing in that quiz show. They will wag a finger at me and remind me of what the elders in Dharavi say about never crossing the dividing line that separates the rich from the
poor. After all, what business did a penniless waiter have participating in a brain quiz? (2)

The sarcasm of the comment, in an extended logic, warrants the leveling powers of the reality show. Ram has indeed bridged that gap through his participation in the show, and hence he faces the impediments. Ram basks in his new found glory that has brought him a new social standing: “After my performance they would have looked at me with new respect” (2). Ram’s life thus takes a drastic turn post the quiz show: in a dreamlike sweep of fortune, the slum boy devours the limelight and suddenly his anonymous existence becomes a matter of public interest with a controversy of cheating in a game show that makes him a known face among the police, human rights activists and the common crowd.\(^{37}\)

The social mobility of the common man through the reality shows is, however not limited solely to his public appearance; rather the lump sum prize money to be won at the end of the show stages the righting the wrongs of society for the masses and projects a distinct neoliberal idea. Mark Andrejevic convincingly argues that the rise of the commoner through TV shows serves as a distraction and compensation for the growing economic disparity in the neoliberal economy (63). Thus, the prize money acquires a talismanic implication of a treasure lying open to be won by anyone, offering a private

\(^{37}\) The novel thus celebrates what Andy Warhol conceptualizes as the inversion of the celebrity equation whereby by exposing his/her private life to the mass media, the common man ascends to the status of a celebrity—much like the popular recognition that the Louds gained after their lives were out for public display on the *American Family*. 
recourse to success especially for those people who have been deprived by the welfare state and the civil society. Consequently, the shows project an apparently egalitarian concept of distributing resources among ordinary people, often as an alternative and private method to remedy the economic deprivation of certain sections of society. Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette assert that reality TV has taken up “the duties of the philanthropist, the social worker, the benefactor, and the ‘guardian angel’” (2). The apparently philanthropic role of reality TV is most potently seen in poverty themed British reality shows like The Secret Millionaire or How the Other Half Lives where the participating millionaires would pick up poor people to donate a hefty sum of money as charity. These philanthropic missions to help out of the ‘chosen’ poor, as part of a media spectacle, not only assert the commoditization of poverty but they conform to the neoliberal discourse of the private intervention in social distribution of wealth. With the free market seeking to shift the responsibility for economic well-being to the realm of the private, the reality shows promise financial success on an individual level.

This narrative of hope in reality TV echoes the rhetoric of neoliberal optimism, which has become one of the major rallying points for the free market. A variant of the American Dream—that anyone can be successful if he takes responsibility for himself and works hard—the neoliberal dream, as Giroux argues, is a new ‘hope’ for individual success that is packaged as a promise of neoliberal capitalism. Built on the premise of the free market, this notion of hope substitutes welfare programs and community activism with a strong sense of self-responsibility. Thus, as Giroux points out, it substitutes
the celebration of wealth, privilege, and greed for notions of hope grounded in an
opposition to economic injustice, racism, domination, and diverse forms of
oppression. Within this discourse, public responsibility is transformed into private
gain, and public issues reduced to private worries. Hope loses its political
bearings in this narrative and rewrites social obligation as the counting up of
private gains and benefits. Similarly, hope is abstracted from any notion of social
vision and the necessity of keeping social change alive. Mortgaged to the dictates
of the global market, the media conglomerates now package hope as either a
commodity or as part of a crude survivalist ethic (“Something’s Missing” 230).

For Giroux, the main propagandists of this new hope are the reality shows like Who
Wants to Be a Millionaire that represent “the prime time media’s offer of hope in the
instant fix” by not only relieving the audience of assuming “any responsibility of the
weak—that is the powerless and the impoverished” (112) but also by projecting a
narrative of economic possibility even for the commonest people.

Projecting a similar rhetoric, the Indian version of Who Wants to be a Millionaire,
renamed as Kaun Banega Crorepati, caught the nation’s fantasy, became an instant hit
and sparked participation from millions of people precisely because it held out the
promise of a better future through a TV show. Running successfully for five seasons, the
show continued to garner high TRPs continuously—the central appeal of the show being
the rhetoric of hope that this show gave out to everyone. As the KBC producer Siddharth
Basu shared the strategic decisions of the show “It was very much a programming
decision to reach out to contestants from further afield, from the interiors, to have video
windows on each one of them, their lives and milieus, their hopes and disappointments...
Because we wanted the viewer to relate more deeply with the person on the hot seat in this life-changing game.” Consequently, contestants were introduced to the audience in their humble backgrounds, tattering houses and lives enmeshed in poverty captured in the videos flashed before the game started, to enhance the redemptive power of the game show for the deprived citizens. More often than not, past winners were brought back to the show in special episodes where they testified how radically their lives have changed after the show.

Q & A too corroborates the discourse of neoliberal hope through reality TV. Swarup himself calls this a novel about hope at the time of economic crisis and uncertainty—in this case offered solely by the new age media through the large sum of money. Thus he exclaims in his interview with *IBN Live*: “The book's message is that hope makes life bright struck a chord. At a time when people were reeling under the global financial crisis, this book spoke about the audacity of hope.” The importance of the prize money is spelt out in the very beginning of the book when the producer of the show, Johnson, assures the commissioner of the real attraction of the game show: “Would it have half as interesting if the top prize had been ten thousand instead of ten million?…the biggest tease in the world is not sex. It’s money. And greater the sum of money the bigger tease” (6). The ‘tease’ of the large sum attracted Ram as well, who entered the quiz show in an acute financial crisis. He desperately needed a lot of money to bail out his beloved from the brothel, and it looked impossible in his current socio-economic status that he would ever succeed. Yet, the quiz show changes his life
completely, serving what Giroux calls as the “instant fix” (112) for his socio-economic problems. The novel ends with a spectacular resolution of all the problems that plagued not only Ram but also his allies whose lives change for the better due to the prize money. The novel’s fairy tale finish certainly echoes the happy ending at the end of a reality game show— the common man walks away with a huge money, and along with it, endless possibilities of altering only his own life, while the larger picture of economic disparity remains the same.

Though his win is prompted by a stroke of luck, the commoner hero Ram Mohammad embodies important tenets of the ideal neoliberal citizen signifying that he is a worthy winner of the money. It is thus not chance alone that can turn one’s life around but rather, to be successful in the neoliberal context one needs to inherently posses, and to a certain degree inculcate in oneself, the essential precepts of the ideal ‘economic man’ or the model of the entrepreneur-consumer “homo œconomicus”. Ram fulfills his role as a consumer very successfully. Like Balram, Ram Mohammad is an avid consumer. Thus after winning the money, he buys himself a luxurious lifestyle complete with a posh mansion by the high-end Juhu beach and chauffeur driven Mercedes Benz and Ferraris. However, apart from being a successful consumer, Ram’s success is warranted by his self-entrepreneurship as well, and most importantly by his ability to manage risks that constitutes another important aspect of neoliberal subjectivity.

Ram’s ability to survive and manage his risks is seen in the action of the novel that is built through the new challenges that Ram faces and overcomes, portraying the various perils of a life in the Indian underbelly. Each chapter is a description of a unique
adventure where Ram is pitted against a hostile environment which often turns perilous for him. Consequently, Ram’s success comes from a skilful maneuvering through the difficult situations, much like the perilous challenges thrown at the contestants in a reality show. Consequently, like the tough struggle for survival in the reality shows, the novel too narrates a powerful tale of survival. The notion of survival, or more precisely the survival of the fittest, overcoming a perilous and competitive society forms a central concept in neoliberal ideology. Drawing from the notions of ‘Social Darwinism’—that conflates the idea of Darwin’s evolution theory with social competition to propagate the notion of the survival of the strong or the fittest in the race for social existence (William Richard Hofstadter; Mike Hawkins), neoliberalism lays immense emphasis on the skills of survival, ingenuity and often fierce competitiveness. As Bourdieu points out: “the power of neoliberal hegemony is based on a new form of social Darwinism: In the words of Harvard ‘the best and the most remarkable win the race’” (51); the ideal subject of neoliberalism is therefore someone with commendable survival skills. Subsequently, echoing the neoliberal ethics of individual survival, the main emphasis, and often the winning factor, in many reality TV shows is the ability to survive in even extreme adverse situations (Ouellette and Hay; Rosendale and Rosendale). While shows like the Survivor and Big Brother strongly harp on the themes of competitive survival but putting contestants against each other and through a process of mutual elimination, other survival shows like Man vs Nature, Man vs Wild, Survivorman hinge on the concept of resourcefulness and ingenuity of the contestants to emerge as successful survivors in the
most extreme situations; or as Giroux puts it, reality TV projects “individuals who define agency in terms of their survival skills” (134).

Similarly, based on the theme of reality TV, Q&A also replicates the notion of individual survival of the subject when pitted against some of the most challenging and threatening situations. The sheer variety and range of the dangerous situations Ram faces is itself overwhelming, and yet he survives through all: Firstly, Ram’s stay in the orphanage becomes eventful with his encounter with a young priest, Brother Tom, who is at once a pedophilic, a gay man who takes drugs, has a leather fetish and lives an alter-life of a outlawed biker. The chapter (“The Burden of a Priest”) features many other adventurous encounters of young Ram with pornography, child molestation, suicide/murder and an illegitimate affair of a priest. Yet, in spite of such perilous encounters, Ram successfully escapes unscathed (35-53). Secondly, the chapter “How to Speak Australian” describes Ram’s experiences at the residence of Colonel Taylor, an Australian diplomat who has set up secret cameras all over his own house, works in a den like office that is equipped like a spectacular espionage unit and is himself a spy on a secret mission. Ram’s stint as a servant actually ends up with his stint as a spy who uncovers the illegal activities of Col. Taylor through the espionage technique of voice counterfeit and emerges out safely from the situation (“How To Speak Australian”, 103-129 ). In another instance, Ram befriends a mentally challenged young boy in Agra and discovers later that he is actually a royal prince thrown out to the slum by his queen mother for discovering her illicit affairs. Ram confronts the powerful queen and is threatened, and yet manages to survive the situation (“X Gkrz Opknu”, 238-300). Again,
in the chapter “Tragedy Queen”, Ram works as a servant at the house of a film star Nilima Devi and gets badly trapped with her dead body after she commits suicide. Though running the possibility of being charged with murder, Ram’s presence of mind saves him from a possible arrest (211-237). As slum kids who encounter the underworld quite closely, Ram and Salim have their brush with dangerous gangsters and train robbers. However, not only do they escape unharmed, in some cases they also outwit the gangsters and get them killed. (“License to Kill”, 192-210 and “Murder on the Western Express”, 148-165). These varied adventurous situations constitute the unique setting for a distinct adventure in each chapter. The narrative thus overwhelms the reader with the sheer variety of situations that Ram faces as challenges. Yet Ram proves to be the ultimate survivor, cruising through every challenge with his own survival skills. As Ram escapes each situation with his own planning, careful actions and successful navigation of risks without any other external help or support, he thus exemplifies the concept of self care in a post welfare society where the individual ideally assumes responsibility for himself and his family and friends, without depending on anyone else to rescue him. Swarup too emphasizes on the theme of handling crises as the most important characteristic of his protagonist, asserting that as an integral part of the Indian survival. When asked in his interview with Mark McDonald whether the “intrinsic theme of the book seems to be captured by the Hindi word “jugaad”— ingenuity, perseverance, fix it”, Swarup agreed:

Exactly, jugaad means to get the job done, somehow or other. It’s really the spirit of India. My phone recently had water damage and I gave it to the Nokia dealer. He said, “No one can do. Can’t be fixed. Just buy a new phone.” If that had
happened in India, some local guy in a little shop would have cloned an old Samsung or Motorola or whatever, and five minutes later, “Here you are Mr. Swarup, it works!” They would never say it cannot be done. Jugaad is the spirit of whatever-it-takes. That’s India. And that’s the spirit of those kids.

Thus, Swarup equates Ram’s ability to get out of crisis to the spirit of innovation which form the cornerstone of his success.

Closely related to the notion of individual survival is the risk management skill of the neoliberal subject. The new age, Ulrich Beck asserts, has ushered in the paradigm of “risk societies” (46) whereby risks are no longer circumscribed spatially or temporarily, but rather all people around the globe are exposed to common risks. Consequently, the neoliberal form of governance shifts the responsibility of risk management from the welfare state on to the private realm of the individual. The ideal neoliberal subject is thus expected to act as a calculative rational choice actor to avert his own risk through judicious decision making and be responsible for managing his own threats. As Pat O’Malley cogently sums it up:

Better understood as prudentialism, it is a technology of governance that removes the key conception of regulating individuals by collectivist risk management, and throws back upon the individual the responsibility of managing risks. This is advocated by its supporters as “efficient”, for individuals will be driven to greater exertion and enterprise by the need to insure against adverse circumstances—and the more enterprising they are, the better safety net they can construct. (197)
The neoliberal subject is thus, what Michael Peters terms as “a calculative rational choice actor” (91) who becomes responsible for a series of investment decisions concerning the various risks associated with one’s health, education, security, employment and in a nutshell, one’s own survival. Thus, while innovation and enterprise still remain the key to success, the neoliberal economy lays increasing emphasis on responsible risk taking which entails, as O’Malley puts it, both “risk minimization or avoidance of harmful risks” (76). Thus, a neoliberal subject not only takes up chances to maximize profit, he or she should now be equally careful of the dangers that pose a threat to him/her and take up responsibility for them on their own. The question of prudence becomes crucial in risk management, for the successful neoliberal survivor has both intuition to perceive risk and ingenuity to avert it.

Much of the emphasis in the reality shows, especially the ones based on the format of a game like *Deal or no Deal* and *Money Drop* lies on the crucial choices and right decisions that the contestants need to make in order to win the game. The format of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* too follows the same mode of making the right choices at every step of the game to minimize the risk of loss and maximize gains. While these are more direct forms of risk management, the outcome of other game shows like *Survivor* and *Big Brother* involving multiple players also depends a lot on the way the contestants speculate their respective threats, identify the enemies or strong contenders, form the right alliances and avert their risk of getting ousted from the game. Most of these choices thus involve managing risk—either in terms of speculating the game or handling obstacles or strategizing against competitors—that finally affect their financial profits.
from the game, and hence the shows often simulate the speculative practices of a financial market in terms of calculated risks. The act of decision taking in the reality game shows thus invokes the contestants in the neoliberal modes of risk management, whereby the contestants need to take calculated risks in their own interest to survive in the game. Swarup’s Q&A too narrates several instances where Ram takes the crucial decisions to manage his risk that ultimately determines the chances of his survival and in the long run, his winning of the prize money. Just like a reality TV contestant who minimizes his/her risk to increase his/her odds at winning the prize money, Ram also manages to be the winner only because he successfully negotiates the aspect of risk in accordance to the neoliberal model of subjectivity.

Ram is impeccable in assessing the gravity of each difficult situation and acting accordingly, often fashioning in own escape routes. For example, in the Taylor house, Ram is the first one to realize that Colonel Taylor is watching every move of all the inmates and thus avoids any action that might get him in trouble, while the rest of the servants keep doing their own things only to be dismissed:

In the fifteen months I have been with the family, five more servants have been dismissed. All because of Colonel Taylor. He is the Man who Knows…I am the only one who has survived. I admit, occasionally I am also tempted to pocket the loose change lying around on Mrs. Taylor’s dressing table or grab one of the Swiss chocolates from the fridge, but I keep such urges in check. Because I know that Colonel Taylor is the Man Who Knows. (106)
There are several other occasions like this where Ram’s sense of caution helps him come out of dangerous situations completely unscathed. As a child too, he is the first one to sense the pedophilic leanings of Father John in the orphanage and thus warns the rest of the boys about him. Again, though Ram comes dangerously close to getting arrested several times—for accidentally murdering a train robber, being witness to Nilima Devi’s suicide and for stealing money from Rani Sahiba’s palace—he manages to cover himself up cleverly and evades trouble. Ram’ decisions always prove right in the long run, making him a subject capable of his personal risk management.

This exemplary capability for trouble management is initially portrayed as Ram’s infallible luck. There are at least three major decisions that Ram makes by flipping his lucky coin which always seems to steer him clear through the threat he faces. Thus, when Smita walks in the police lock up as Ram’ lawyer, Ram tosses his coin to decide if he should trust her. Ram goes with the coin’s decision to trust her and it turns out to be the most positive choices Ram makes towards attaining his freedom from police custody and winning his prize money. Similarly, Ram tosses his coin to decide if he and Salim should leave Maman’s den of crippled children, which again turns out to be a smart choice that saves them from mutilation. Again, the coin correctly predicts the dangers of robbing Rani Sahiba’s locker for Lajwanti and indeed she does get arrested for the risky venture. Finally, Ram tosses the coin to decide the correct answer for the last question on the quiz show that places Ram under the risk of losing “a hundred million in less than a minute”(312) if his answer is wrong. Once again, the coin leads him to the correct answer and a billion rupees of prize money. While the coin is apparently presented as a piece of
talisman that seems to protect Ram from every obstacle, the end of the novel reveals the coin as a useless one for dictating a choice since it has the same image imprinted on both sides. We come to realize that the decisions were throughout taken by Ram himself—his successful navigation through the obstacle of his life was not prompted by luck but rather his own ability to perceive risks and act accordingly. Having established himself as a successful neoliberal survivor who has also acquired capital, Ram tosses away the coin at the end of his story, proclaiming: “I won’t need it anymore. Because luck comes from within” (318). Ram thus proves to be a successful manager of risks with an excellent ability to make right decisions. In his ability to minimize risks, Ram Mohammad personifies what Louise Amoore and Amieke de Goede define as neoliberal “prudentialism,” in which “subjects are required to prudently calculate, and thereby minimize, the risk that could befall them” (27). Capable of foreseeing the future hazards and of minimizing his losses, Ram becomes an ideal responsible neoliberal subject.

In contrast to Ram is Salim, another boy from the slum who initially shares the same socio-economic status as Ram but lags behind in terms of risk perception and ingenuity to tackle crises. Salim is portrayed as too naïve, almost to the point of being careless, that makes him inadequate as a neoliberal subject. Interestingly, the novel not only portrays Salim lacking all the skills that Ram has, Salim is also admonished and counseled by Ram to be a more judicious individual. Significantly, the novel charts his makeover from his naiveté to an enterprising individual, projecting a correctional progression towards a more desirable neoliberal subjectivity.
The process of Salim’s transition from a weakling, incapable of surviving without Ram’s help, to an ingenious plotter, who cleverly eliminates his enemies, again closely follows the correction method of makeover shows on reality TV that intercept the ‘imperfect’ individual and aim to transform “ordinary people into improved versions of themselves” (Ouellette and Hay 102). Terming these programs as “life interventions programs” (85), Ouellette and Hay assert how these shows mobilize all kinds of professional motivators and ‘lifestyle experts’ to help people overcome all kinds of obstacles— in their personal, professional, and domestic lives — by instilling self-management techniques. Consequently, Ouellette and Hay argue that these shows essentially project the idea of neoliberal self-government by producing citizens that are capable of managing themselves in accordance to a neoliberal subjectivity of risk management. In Salim’s case, Ram takes over the role of his counselor and guide, teaching him the ways of survival. Salim’s transformation from naiveté, after multiple instances of Ram’s chastisement, follows the essential stages of an individual’s makeover that Brenda Weber locates in makeover reality shows, namely:

a) An initial portrayal of the subjects of makeover as weak, vulnerable and worthy of sympathy (7)—followed by shaming and rebuking of the subjects to make them subscribe

38 Life interventions programs on reality TV include, amongst others, very popular formats such as Supernanny, How Clean is your House, and Honey, we’re Killing the Kids, series all of which originated from the BBC; and very successful American series as Dr Phil, Intervention, Judge Judy, Biggest Loser, How Do I Look and Clean House.

39 Also see A McCarthy “Reality Television: A Neoliberal Theatre of Suffering” and John McMurria “Desperate Citizens and Good Samaritans: Neoliberalism and Makeover Reality TV”
to the urgency of their makeover (31); the actual process of guidance and supervision with caring attention from the experts through the logic of “love power” or what Weber calls “affective domination” (96); and the final “big reveal” where the After-body or the more desirable avatar of the subject is revealed to the amazed audience (2).

Salim’s transformation as a protégée of Ram, in terms of skills of survival and risk management, follow a similar trajectory of subsequent stages in a personality makeover show. In sync with the first stage of change, Salim too is initially portrayed as too naïve and defenseless against the abusers and living a victimized life. Salim is thus the ill-fated orphan boy, hailing from marginal community of Muslims in India and whose family had been tragically killed in the violence of a riot. Left alone to fend for himself, Salim is all the more pitiable since he lacks the essential resourcefulness to survive alone and is rendered vulnerable at multiple instances of his life. Thus, Salim is immature enough to blindly worship the larger than life film heroes, spend his money vainly on a roadside soothsayer, and nurture improbable fantasies about becoming a film star. Consequently, his lack of a sense of alert constantly lands him in danger—unsuspecting as he is, he becomes the easy target of sexual abuse for both Armaan Ali and the orphanage deputy, Gupta. Consequently, his immature disposition is constantly reprimanded by Ram, who urges him to change himself for a better fit in an enterprising society. Corresponding to the second stage of expert guidance in makeover shows, Ram too steers Salim through situations of danger, offering his guidance and advice. Thus, Ram is the one who senses trouble both the times when Salim is about to be abused. While Salim remains clueless even when Gupta undresses him and was about to rape
him, it is Ram who realizes the gravity of the situation and raises a cry of alarm to call people and saves Salim in the nick of time. Similarly, when caught in Maman’s orphanage— that deliberately maimed children to turn them into pitiable beggars— Ram senses the dangers and steers himself and a completely unsuspecting Salim out of the place, asserting his self-assigned responsibility to play Salim’s mentor: “I am your guardian angel, and you are part of my package deal” (98). Alongside driving Salim clear through many dangers, Ram also chastises him for his foolishness and imparts advice for a smarter living. Thus, when Salim wants counseling from a roadside palmist, Ram rebukes him for wasteful spending and warns him of the fraud involved in such services. On a similar note, Ram sermonizes Salim on the basic rules for risk free living: “I told you not to poke your nose into other people’s affairs or make other people’s troubles your own. Remember this as a lesson for the future” (55). Ram is thus both Salim’s mentor and the disciplining guardian without whom Salim becomes a vulnerable victim in a dark world of poverty and crime.

Ram’s guidance for Salim is primarily directed towards making Salim more perceptive to his imminent risks and accordingly to escape situations that might harm him both physically and financially. Though both of the same age, Ram is more enterprising and a far better risk manager than Salim, who need to learn the skills of resourcefulness from Ram to be a successful neoliberal subject. Corresponding to the third stage of “big reveal” in the makeover shows, Salim is ultimately revealed as a transformed individual who can not only gauze his risks but also knows how to manipulate the odds to turn the situation in his best possible interest. The chapter “License to Kill”, which focuses solely
on Salim’s experience, narrates his encounter with a contract killer and the way Salim played with a smart strategy to attain multiple goals, all in his personal interest.

Appointed as a household help for Ahmed Khan, a now smarter Salim quickly realizes that Ahmed is a contract killer, who gets his assigned target’s photo mailed to him in an envelope. On discovering that Ahmed has been contracted to kill a film producer who had promised Salim a role, Salim manipulates the situation with an amazing entrepreneurial ingenuity. Salim not only informs the producer of his imminent danger—who expresses his gratitude by securing Salim’s acting career considerably—but also gets rid of his threatening personal enemy, Maman, by swapping his photo with that of the producer’s as Ahmed’s targeted victim. Salim cleverly escapes from Ahmed before he is caught, and his feat of manipulation secures him a dream career, a riddance of his enemy and a successful evasion from any connection to the contract killer. Salim is thus, a transformed subject not only capable of sensing his threats and steering clear through them, but also becomes one like Ram Mohammad who can reap profits even out of the worst situations. Consequently, his transformation is applauded by Smita—and in a way the readers too—with the same amazement that the transformed subject is applauded after makeover in the reality shows. With Salim transformed from an infantile subject citizen to a desirable neoliberal subject with entrepreneurial skills, the experiences of the narrative reach their purpose.

Having discussed the concept of self-care in both White Tiger and Q&A let me end the discussion with a brief analysis of the problematic premise of this concept. The notion of self-care, though apparently enabling, is a rhetoric based on the survival of the
fittest. The concept is an important articulation of the transformation of the welfare state to a neoliberal state that significantly diminishes, as Martinez and Garcia point out, public expenditure for welfare programs, leaving the poor without a support system. As David Harvey points out that “as the state withdraws from welfare provision and diminishes its role in arenas such as health care, public education, and social services,…it leaves larger and larger segments of the population exposed to impoverishment”(76). The concept of self-care is directly correlated with this withdrawal of the social safety net, projecting a system that promotes individual responsibility. Consequently, this notion also generates an anti-poor discourse, whereby those incapable of self-care are condemned and criminalized. As Martinez and Garcia point out, one of the characteristic features of neoliberalism is to impose the culture of self-responsibility among the poorest margins of society—“pressuring the poorest people in a society to find solutions to their lack of health care, education and social security all by themselves -- then blaming them, if they fail, as "lazy."” Harvey also asserts, in a similar way, how “the social safety net is reduced to a bare minimum in favour of a system that emphasizes personal responsibility. Personal failure is generally attributed to personal failings, and the victim is all too often blamed” (76). Self-care thus becomes a discourse of propagating a neoliberal subjectivity that is conducive to the growth of the market; subsequently it also justifies the discourse of the exclusion and punishing of the poor as failed subjects. I discuss in the next chapter how the failure of the poor, marginal subject to fit into the neoliberal model leads to a discourse of his criminalization and consequent disciplining.
Adiga’s *The White Tiger* and Swarup’s *Q&A* thus revolve around the underdog’s journey through the various obstacles and narrate the tale of their ultimate success in the context of neoliberal globalization. In a failing welfare state and a hegemonic society fraught with age-old hierarchies of caste, class, and religion, neoliberalism projects itself as the new emancipatory force for the marginal. Consequently, by constructing the essentialized subjectivities of marginality in the characters of Balram and Ram Mohammad, both the novels thus display how the paradigm of marginality is appropriated to serve as emphatic testimonies of the neoliberal regime. The marginal hero thus becomes the ideal subject and endorser of the neoliberal rhetoric and offers a strong testimony of its spectacular success.
CHAPTER 3

The Neoliberal City: Urban Space, Noir Fiction and the Criminal Subject

“Why is the Third-World metropolis suddenly taking over western culture?
…Why would it be so? For a start, the rumours crackling in from the Third World have ceased to be quaint. Indian and Chinese business people rattle assumptions by buying up major corporate assets in America and Europe; there are stories of Asian billionaires buying houses at record-breaking prices in Belgravia. There is a dim awareness of something monumental happening far away, of extraordinary wealth creation that goes beyond mere imitation. More perceptive observers see something awe-inspiring in outsourcing: for a western, metropolitan outlook could not have imagined a world so devoid of centre, so unsentimentally flattened out… exist in those places for such plans to be dreamed up. All that was “backward” swings round to the front, full of vast and uncanny promise”.

Rana Dasgupta, “The Sudden Stardom of Third World City”

Rana Dasgupta points out in his article “The Sudden Stardom” that the third world city, or more particularly the Indian city, has become a popular theme for recent novelistic explorations. Along with the rags to riches stories, recent Indo-Anglican literature has
also seen a burgeoning of the genre of urban crime fictions set against the backdrop of India’s modernizing metropolises. While explorations of the contemporary Indian city mostly consists of non-fictional, journalistic writings, like Katherine Boo’s Pulitzer winning book *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*, William Dalrymple’s *City of Djinns* and Suketu Mehta’s *Maximum City*, the genre also includes fictions like Altaf Tyrewala’s critically acclaimed debut novel *No God in Sight*, Vikram Chandra’s bestseller *Sacred Games*, William Dalrymple’s *City of Djinns* and Suketu Mehta’s *Maximum City*, the genre also includes fictions like Altaf Tyrewala’s critically acclaimed debut novel *No God in Sight*, Vikram Chandra’s bestseller *Sacred Games*, Tarun Tejpal’s *The Story of My Assassins*, Hrish Sawhney’s volume of short stories *Delhi Noir*, Atish Tasser’s *The Templegoers* and others, which deal with the dark underside of the cities. The modern Indian novel is often the novel of urban India, particularly cosmopolitan cities like Delhi and Mumbai, and the story of the third-world underbelly grappling with the changing dynamics of the urban space. Thus, gone are the verdant and idyllic landscapes of Roy’s *God of Small Things* or the stagnant and decaying cities of the Emergency period in Rushdie and Mistry; what takes the center stage today are stories of throbbing urban hubs of a new India that swings with and embraces a changing global economy. The image of the so called disorder and chaos of the third world city—which Rana Dasgupta lovingly reminiscences as the European tourist’s chagrin at the cows and the camels on the streets or the disarray of the slums sprawling in the heart of the city (the corrugated sheets and the tarpaulins)—have been gradually replaced by a city that has transformed itself with the onset of globalization. The
modern Indian cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore transform from just cities to what Saskia Sassen terms as “global cities”—the crucial localized nodes in the network of global capitalism. These Indian cities thus mirror the various processes of neoliberal urban re-structuring and the transformation of the city in accordance to the tenets of global capitalism that often shape the other global cities in the world. Consequently, attempting to effectively map the changing milieu of the Indian cities through the lives of the urban poor, the urban fictions not only depict metamorphosing city landscapes but also focus on the stunning ‘realities’ of the urban underworld, the criminal subjects of the slums and the margins and the inner life of the urban anti-hero. These new string of novels that claim to expose the murky ‘reality’ of the glossy Indian cities, weave narratives of poverty, exploitation, violence of the underprivileged in the city, and inevitably invoke the figure of the underclass criminal as the central focus of the narratives. While Rana Dasgupta in “A New Bend in the River” celebrates this trend of highlighting the criminal protagonists as signifying the dispossession of the elite or middle class, English speaking bourgeois versions of reality of the earlier Indian English novels by subaltern “realities”, a more nuanced reading of these novels reveal them as not only reflecting the changing socio-economic conditions of the nation but also

40 The chaos, filth and dismay of the Indian cities in the eyes of the Eurocentric traveler have been famously captured in Dominique Lapierre’s *City of Joy* and V.S. Naipaul’s *India: A Million Mutinies*

41 Sassen defines “Global cities” as “the centers for servicing and financing of international trade, investment, and headquarters operations – wherever these might be located. That is to say, the multiplicity of specialized activities in global cities are crucial in the valorization, indeed overvalorization of leading sectors of capital today. And in this sense they are strategic production sites for today’s leading economic sectors” (“Whose city is this”?)
depi
ting a discourse of social control with new modes of surveillance for the lower class
margins in the new urban cities.

This chapter looks at the fictional representation of the marginal groups in the
context of the neoliberal city. Central to the notion of marginality is the exclusion of the
poor from the growth process under globalization. One of the most potent critiques of the
neoliberal globalization has been its differential influence on the different strata of the
society, whereby several scholars have argued that globalization and the regime of the
free market have failed to include the poor and the underclass in its stride of progress
(Harvey; Gough, Eisenschitz, and McCulloch; Ryan). Though the IMF and World
Bank’s globalization rhetoric is essentially directed towards alleviating poverty—giving
rise to the concept of what the UNDP report of 1999 calls as “globalization with a human
face” (1)—the globalization of free market, as the IMF itself confesses, has failed to
address the problem of global poverty and has often led to a greater degree of
disenfranchisement of the already marginalized sections.42 This has consequently led to
an alternative rhetoric of castigating the poor. As Gough, Eisenschitz, and McCulloch
point out:

42 The Director of IMF’S Office in Europe, Flemming Larsen asserts this in his
2001 address:
“There is a striking contrast in the global economy. Living standards and the
quality of life are steadily on the rise in the industrial countries as well as in a
number of emerging economies. But both are stagnating in a number of the
poorest countries, in particular in Africa. Some African countries are even
regresssing. The income gap between the rich and the poor has never been so
great. Reversing this trend is imperative”.[ “Globalization and the Poor Countries:
Viewpoint of the IMF”]
This political embarrassment is then covered by labeling the unemployed as work-shy and feckless…the poor are no longer portrayed as economically rational but as culturally different from the rest of the population, that is an ‘underclass’…Moreover the neoliberal reliance on the market fails to socially and ideologically integrate the poor, manifested in crime, drug abuse and riots…A discourse which blames wide socio-economic failure on laziness and social indiscipline in society as a whole provides an excuse for failure. (170)

With the poor sections being excluded from the neoliberal growth, globalization, as Ronaldo Munck points out, thus creates a new form of “social exclusion” even in the global south (21). In a similar way, Manuel Castells points out a telling image of the “Fourth World”, comprising of “exclusion of people and territories, which from the perspective of dominant interests in global, informational capitalism, shift to a position of structural irrelevance” (167). This chapter explores such narratives of exclusion of the marginal subject in a post-globalized world in the context of the neoliberal urban space.

Through a study of the fictional urban geography in Tarun Tejpal’s novel *The Story of My Assassins* I argue how Tejpal’s Delhi embodies the spatial alienation of the elites and the marginalized, constructs the poor as criminal subjects and projects a structuring of its urban space in the model of neoliberal urbanism. Concurrently, I also analyze Vikram Chandra’s novel *Sacred Games* through the concepts of panopticism and surveillance in terms of its narrative technique, to explore how the discourse of criminality construct, interpret, and regulate criminal subjectivities within the city space.
The divided city in Tarun Tejpal’s *The Story of My Assassins*:

The second novel by the journalist turned novelist Tarun Tejpal, *The Story of My Assassins* projects a contemporary Delhi that has been sufficiently modernized as a global city. The narrator, like Tejpal, is an anonymous journalist who, one fine day, suddenly finds himself to be the target of an elaborate assassination plan. Abruptly hurled into a world of police protection, media attention, courtroom and professional criminals, the narrator experiences a dark world of crime and corruption. Well known for his sting operation journalism on corrupt political figures, the novelist Tejpal captures in his novel the same murky corruption, inner secrets and depravity of the politicians in power through the eyes of his narrator, who himself lives a corrupt double life with illegal dealings and a steamy extra-marital affair. However, central to the novel is the story of the five ‘assassins’—Chaaku, Kabir, Kaliya, Chini and Hathoda—who are charged with attempting to murder the narrator. The novel explores the dark underbellies of urban Delhi as well as the violent rural hinterlands on its fringes, and focus on how the poor and the marginal groups live a precarious life of dispossession, criminality and violence, which is in complete contrast to the luxurious and sheltered lives of the urban middle and upper classes. The main appeal of the novel thus lies in the way it delineates the bleak underside of ‘shining’ India which is under the constant threat of the potentially disruptive, ‘criminal’ marginalities that form the underclass. Referring to the violence of the novel, Suresh Menon describes how the narrative exposes “stories of his five assassins who have emerged from a system where rape is a weapon of mass destruction, where the sensitive learn to stick knives into or hammer the brains out of those who cross
their paths, and where forgiveness comes with the successful murder or with settling of
scores.” Similarly, S. Prasannarajan praises the novel not only for its blatant portrayal of
violence that shocks, but also for the revelatory “cracks of the horrors from where it
originates.” He goes on to explain: “It is a world where life is nasty, brutal, dispensable.
Where power is measured by violence and fear. Where India is a story devoid of the
moral certainties that propel those who live by, well, Wystan Hugh”. Again, lauding the
novel as “one of the most engaging political novels of recent times” Binoo K John reads
the novel as an expression of Tejpal’s contempt for the “sanitized novels” of India,
whereby Tejpal throws “these disturbing stories at them and us, guilt-tripping our
conscience and also taking us along on such frightful and impassioned journeys.”
Similarly, for reviewer Sudipta Datta, the novel is an impassioned exploration of the
neglected underbelly: “The novel holds up a story that is unequal, corrupt, unjust, blind.
Tejpal sifts through the noise and chaos that is India to bring us stories about the
dispossessed and the marginalized, the ones we gloss over while carrying on our
quotidian tasks.” Tejpal’s novel thus, essentially projects a dystopia of the marginalized
entities in the urban sphere. As the city restructures itself for the entrepreneurial elites,
the underbelly is pushed to father margins into darker realms of violence and criminality.

The restructuring of the city is one of the central effects of neoliberal
globalization, precisely because the city assumes a focal point in global capitalism.
Saskia Sassen asserts the significance of the local place, especially the urban centers in
globalization, that form the central nodes of the global networks of both capital and
people (Global City). On a similar note, David Harvey in his book Social Justice and the
City aptly sums up the metaphoric significance of the modern cities—“The city is a vantage point from which to capture some salient features operating in society as a whole—it becomes as it were a mirror in which other aspects of society can be reflected” (16). The truth of Harvey’s statement can be felt in the way the current prominence of the market led economic and social ideologies reflect in the material and spatial re-mapping of the modern city. The changes in the urban sphere towards a more defined agenda for investment and economic production started as early as in the 1970s, as noted by early scholars like Boddy, Cochrane, Rees and Lambert, Blunkett and Jackson. Later, several contemporary urban geographers such as David Harvey, Jamie Peck, Adam Tickell, Neil Smith argue that neoliberal urbanism—characterized as entrepreneurial, city management, privatization, deregulation and extension of market logics to the provision of urban services—has reshaped the urban space to a considerable degree. While Harvey asserts that urban governance has increasingly moved in line with the rules of capital accumulation in the current phase of neoliberalism (“Neoliberalism and the City” 43), Neil Brenner and Nik Theodre call this urban restructuring “the actually existing neoliberalism” (4)—signifying the “contextually specific interactions between inherited regulatory landscapes and emergent neoliberal, market-oriented restructuring projects at a broad range of geographical scale” (4). Similarly, arguing that the workings of capital determines and is largely determined by geographical spaces, Brenner and Theodre assert how the cities have become “crucial geographical arenas in which a variety of neoliberal initiatives—along with closely intertwined initiatives of crisis displacement and crisis
management—have been articulated”(4). The city in the context of economic globalization thus becomes the microcosm of the globalizing world itself.

In this context, Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell point out that recent urban development both promotes and normalizes the “growth first” motto of neoliberalism, “reconstituting the social-welfarist arrangement as anti-competitive costs and rendering issues of redistribution and social investment as antagonistic to the overriding objectives of economic development”(47). As a consequence, cities compete to attract opportunities for promotion and investment through its structural growth geared towards tapping entrepreneurial resources and simultaneously “forecloses alternative paths of urban development based, for example on social retribution, economic rights and public retribution”(47). The comprehensive goal of such changes in policy is to relocate the city space as a site that prioritizes both market-oriented economic growth and the consumption practices of the elite class. The basis of this prioritization is the relative productivity of the economic classes, whereby the modern city privileges its most creative citizens. As Jamie Peck aptly explains:

Policies are designed to stimulate the “creative growth” of city economies—usually by way of market-friendly interventions in the cultural sphere, to attract or retain elite workers—Catering to the creative class has become, almost simultaneously a favored strategy, an urgent imperative and a hackneyed cliché of contemporary urban policy making…an influential thesis has been that productive potential is carried by a creative class of individuals who will be attracted only to cities with “buzz,” cities with a welcoming and sustaining people
climate…Extant urban development models have been retrofitted around this vision of creative growth. (41)

The city is thus remapped according to the demands and needs of the groups who can be most productive for global capitalism.

Tejpal’s Delhi embodies a fitting example of a city catering to the elites and the productive class. The anonymous journalist narrator, unapologetic about his class privilege, inhabits a city complete with gated residential communities for the middle class to the lavish bungalows of the rich politicians. The narrator aptly sums up the highlights of the neoliberal city that supports a very specific life style reflected through the narrator’s own perception of the urban space—“office, home, sports club, lawyers, restaurants, movie hall. That was the universe” (34). It is a city which safely shelters the residential buildings of middle class professionals and of US returned fashionable intellectuals like Sarah, the business offices of entrepreneurship and capital growth, and the expensive sports complexes that primarily thrive on the consumerism of popular Indian game, cricket. Right beside the sports club is the equestrian enclosure where the rich kids are “brought there by their fair, painted-up mothers or by dark, tired domestics to play out their horse fantasies”(292). Tejpal’s narrator sums up the glimpses of urban reality of modern India: “The young boys watched NBA games on cable television and were shod in Nike shoes…These were kids for whom India was just a vast amusement park, set up by some earnest geezers after kicking out some white men”(293). While the cultural globalization, or more precisely Americanization, is complete with the narrator’s description of the NBA and the Nike used by the Indian kids, the visual landmarks of
globalization are symbolized in the McDonald’s outlets and in the huge billboards that flash the local retails of the international brands of merchandise. Simultaneously, the urban space also testifies the processes of the ‘neoliberal aestheticization’ of the city—what Choon-Piew Pow aptly describes as the “minute detail and sensory pleasure” that “has been meticulously planned and ordered to create a picturesque and pristine living environment” (372) —through the shopping complexes and the opulent emporia that trade the exotic local art at exorbitant prices. Tejpal’s tongue-in-cheek description of such an emporium brings out the sensory appeal of such high end commercial centers that adorn a world class city like Delhi:

These outlets were gleaming affairs—glass fronted, wood paneled, air-conditioned, worked by elegant women in silk sarees. Not Indian shops but international showrooms, with big glossy books on art and culture, that piped Indian classical music and herbal tea…we looked around at the carpets, the ornate, richly polished furniture with inlays of stone.” (274)

The prominence of such spaces in the landscape of the city points to an important process of ‘gentrification’ that implements the agenda of prioritizing the entrepreneur class in specific policies of urban restructuring.

Describing how the neoliberal city is remodeled through a comprehensive process, Ruth Glass uses the term “gentrification” (ii), defining it as process by which more and more landscapes in the city are fenced off and converted to spaces exclusively catering to the residential needs, business needs and sites of leisure and consumption of this group. In a founding statement in as early as 1964, Glass observes this process in
which one by one the working class quarters of London were replaced by middle class housing, which are further taken over by more opulent residences. Discussing the origins of this gradual change, she writes: “Once this process of “gentrification” starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed” (xviii). Neil Smith however contends that remaking the city for the middle class is not limited to gentrified housing. Rather contemporary gentrification converts vast expanses of the city space into “comprehensive class-inflected urban remake” (“New Globalism” 443). He thus asserts: “These new landscape complexes now integrate housing with shopping, restaurants, cultural facilities (cf Vine 2001), open space, employment opportunities—whole new complexes of recreation, consumption, production, and pleasure, as well as residence” (443). Touted as urban development, these modes of spatial restructuring ensure the exclusion of the poor, ‘non-productive’ groups from the smooth functioning of the global capital flow in a city, now converted primarily to a trope of entrepreneurship and consumption, where not only is capital generated but products are also consumed, favoring the growth of the free market.

Coming back to the depiction of Delhi in The Story, apart from the elite residential and commercial spaces that cover the expanse of the main city, a particularly telling example of the gentrification of Delhi in the novel is found in the lavish private farmhouse of the Frock Raja, described as “five acres of lala land” complete with sculptured fountains, huge swimming pools, carefully maintained lawns and a fancy stable (55). Farmhouses, or what Soni calls as the “prized fiefdoms of the urban gentry”
(77), are large rural or semi rural lands privately owned by the affluent city dweller as a weekend getaway facilitating a short, stylized village experience. Mushrooming predominantly around the fringes and the surrounding rural lands around Delhi, not only does the trend of farmhouse tourism mark a significant process of commercialization of the ‘undeveloped’ villages into more productive hubs of capital generation, the demand for farmhouses among the urban gentry dominate the real estate market as a part of the larger gentrification of the city.\textsuperscript{43} The conversion of rural lands into private property for elite consumption necessarily accompanies a severe encroachment on agricultural lands (Thakur 573) and a gradual displacement of the farmer by the urban elite. Sam Miller points out that as the city kept expanding, farmhouses lost their agricultural purpose and were taken over as part of the city. They are essentially private sites of elite consumption, with high walls guarding them from prying eyes and private security guards guarding its boundaries. Moreover, these are spaces where “there is not a farmer to be seen” (Miller 277). For Miller, the farmhouse culture is an extension of the overall changes happening in Delhi in the 1990s, coalescing with the development of Delhi’s satellite city Gurgaon as “India’s most modern city” that attracted significant foreign investment, new industries, multinationals and a residential crowd aspiring for the elite westernized urban experience in India (277-78).

Representing to these spatial developments in Delhi, Tejpal’s narrative also offers a glimpse of the farmhouse that harbors the luxuries of the politically powerful and the

\textsuperscript{43} see M.R.Biju: \textit{Sustainable Dimensions of Tourism Management}
immensely wealthy. The sheer expanse and extravagance of the private property is both preposterous and overwhelming:

There were water spurting Scandinavian marble mermaids with large Indian breasts, a topiary of dinosaurs, a swimming pool shaped like a flounced skirt... undulating manicured lawns with colourful steel birds poised for takeoff, lines of mast trees trimmed to precisely the same height flanking every pathway... a Yeats pond with the fifty-nine swans of Coole, a dining room in a mock stable with two handsome horses tethered in a corner. (55)

The importance of this place is enhanced by the fact that this is the site where million dollar deals are made and the entrepreneurial class plans on new business ventures that both justifies and explains the opulence of the place. Tejpal thus describes Delhi as a city of opulence and luxury, of consumption and capital flow that matches any other global city in terms of its glitz and amenities for the economically privileged.

Significantly enough, if the Delhi projected in Tejpal’s novel is an urban space essentially for elite consumption and global capital flow, it is also a model of urbanization that testifies the power of the state. As the narrator evocatively describes the core of the city:

Outside the gates of the courts ran the wide stately roads of Lutyens’ Delhi, curving with an imperial assurance around imposing edifices of the National Stadium, the National Gallery of Modern Art and the India Gate, the taking the high road to Raisina Hill where the monoliths of North and South Block continued to be metaphors for the imperiousness and inscrutability of the state
before finishing up inside the excessive sprawl of the presidential palace, an appropriate metaphor of shallow decorativeness. Patrolled by police jeeps, these were ceremonial roads, cocooning a space where the state could continually convince itself of its power and purpose. (74)

The detailed description of the edifices of state power in an urban space built on the tenets of neoliberalism emphasizes the significant conflation of the state and the market in the age of global capitalism. As David Harvey points out, “neoliberalism does not make the state or particular institutions of the state (such as courts and police functions) irrelevant” (*Brief History* 78), but on the other hand the state is supposed to be actively creating conducive conditions for the market. A key difference between the earlier liberalism or *laissez faire* and neoliberalism is this very alliance between the state and the market (Foucault; David Toke; Harvey; Lee and McBride). Neoliberal urbanization, therefore, is implemented and maintained by the state intervention (Brenner and Theodre 76), creating a nexus of power between the apparently contradictory entities of the government and the market.

Tejpal’s description of the political center of Delhi conjures up the other half of the power paradigm in this modern global city. Like the gentrified city that is aestheticized and marked exclusively for the elite class, the vast expanse of the ceremonial government buildings and the wide, ornamented roads of Central Delhi project a similar process of beautifying and ordering of the urban space for the political elite. Like the gentrified half of the city, the political and administrative blocks of Delhi are essentially kept free of illegal settlements, *jhuggis* and slums and of stray poor or
encroachment by the socio-economically marginalized. The interesting parallel between “the excessive sprawl of the presidential palace” and the expansive land of Frock Raja’s farmhouse is latently drawn in the description of the wasteful size of both—for both exemplify the acquiring of vast expanses of the city space for private or state ownership that is exclusive to people with power and money. Moreover, the historical trajectory of power in the urbanization of Delhi is also invoked in the British colonial buildings of India Gate, the National Stadium, and the Rashtrapati Bhawan (“presidential palace)—all built during the colonial restructuring of New Delhi under the British architect Edwin Lutyen. Built as a part of the British attempt to emphasize its colonial power on the geographical space of Delhi through veritable and colossal monumental landmarks, these imperial monuments have now come to signify the emblematic edifices of the current government of India, testifying the continuity of power from imperialism to the modern Indian state. Tejpal thus portrays a contemporary picture of a global city that emphatically testifies the all pervasive appropriation of the urban space exclusively for the wealthy and the powerful. Quite aptly then, the city is primarily etched through the upper class journalist narrator’s eyes, who not only has access to all the spaces in the city but is also a part of the gentrified class whose consumerist lifestyle is carefully nurtured by the city.

Though the beautification and modernization of the urban space emphatically bears out the undeniable marks of a neoliberal urban restructuring that prioritizes the ‘productive’ class, what is particularly striking in this process of urbanization is the way this desired model of the city is reached and preserved. The preservation of the spaces of
productivity and capital formation are essentially guaranteed by an exclusion of the ‘nonproductive’ class of the socio-economically marginalized, who are pushed to the margins of the city. Securing the city for the free market calls for state administered disciplinary techniques of social control that safeguard the neoliberal reconfiguration of the spaces, limit their access and implement exclusion, and most importantly conceptualize forms of regulation to police the underclass population. As Gordon MacLeod points out:

While the political invocation of an entrepreneurial urban agenda offers many inner-city spaces a spectacular makeover, it also risks deepening socioeconomic polarities along social cleavages like class, ethnicity, gender, age, and occupation. And by journeying beyond the overheating downtown we observe some additional inscriptions of this new urban geography, variously captured in debates around a “dual”, “quartered,” “walled” or fortress city…These perspectives offer compelling dramatizations about how the contemporary urban form appears to be manifesting as an intensely uneven patchwork of microspaces that are physically proximate but institutionally estranged. (258)

MacLeod builds on Edward Soja’s concept of the “carceral cities” (a concept Soja further borrows from Foucault and was also used by Mike Davis), which Soja describes as “an archipelago of ‘normalized enclosures’ and fortified spaces that both voluntarily and involuntarily barricade individuals and communities in visible and not so visible urban islands” (299). Thus, one of the most important transformations witnessed by the modern Indian city is this polarization of spaces---the marking out of separate spaces for the rich
and the poor. Matt Hern thus names the modern neoliberal city as the “dual city” where there are “separate worlds living right beside each other, occupying the same space but living different realities” (15). Therefore, as the city witnesses a shrinking of the public spaces into spaces of private consumption and entrepreneurial ventures, it also sees a dispossession of the socio-economically marginal groups from the inner city to the urban margins or to specific, separate geographical confinements within the urban landscape.

Echoing their Western counterparts, several Indian urban geographers and sociologists have also noted an increasing trend of neoliberal urbanism in Indian cities. Gautam Bhan’s detailed study of millennia Delhi reveals a startling picture of massive evictions of the slums and the poor populations from the city space between the years 1990-2000, signifying the changing attitude of the urban policy makers towards the socio-economically marginalized groups in the city. As Bhan argues, the evictions testify “increasingly altered understandings of poverty and inequality based on a “misrecognition” (9) of the poor that become the ethical basis of the disavowal of their rights” and more importantly “a changing discourse on the ideas of government rooted in the slow demise of the nationalist development state and the rise of neoliberal ideologies of self-government and market participation” (131). Similarly, Aditya Nigam’s impassioned study of Delhi, which he calls a “postcolonial city with a first world desire” too reveals a restructuring of the city in accordance to neoliberal urbanism, whereby city planners desire to make Delhi into another ‘global metropolis’, in concurrence with the rapidly emerging ‘new global order’ (40). Nandini Gooptu offers a seminal study of the post-liberalization Indian city in which both the public and the private sector coalesce
together in a ‘revanchist’ plan against the urban poor, signifying the “emergence of the ‘entrepreneurial city’” in India and “the process of urban gentrification as a form of elite revolt” (35). Gooptu particularly refers to the launch of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission that covered 60 cities, in 2005 in which the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh declared a blatant mission to remodel Indian cities as a “bridge between domestic economy and global economy” (qtd in Gooptu 37).

Consequently, Gooptu notes that there has been an aggressive effort to re-engineer the erstwhile images of the Indian cities like Kolkata, Mumbai, Ahmadabad from being cities of poverty, squalor and political unrest to world class cities of entrepreneurial opportunities. Thus in the drive to modernize the Indian cities as glitzy centers of commerce and leisure, the urban spaces have been revamped and given a new appearance, but at the cost of the poorer residents.

In Tejpal’s novel, the wealth and power of the elite city is glaringly contrasted with these margins and separate spaces of the underbelly that are marked by poverty, squalor and crime. Tejpal portrays an alternative Delhi that resides in the suburbs and fringes of the metropolis—in the shanty one-room apartments and the slums and the filthy railway station that shelters the beggars and the street children. In a striking difference with the spaces that stand for “privatopias and cathedrals of consumption” (MacLeod 261), Tejpal describes the sordid “two bedroom second-floor flat in Punjabi Bagh” (164) which harbors criminals like Mr. Healthy and the dagger-wielding Chaaku:

Built on a two-hundred-square-yard plot, the flat was dark and delerict, all sun and light cut off by the houses crowding it in. It had one bathing bathroom with a
leaking brass top, and one Indian-style crap cubicle with an old style iron cistern strapped high on the wall…Even with all lights on it felt like a dungeon. All the window sills and grilles were daubed with bird droppings, mostly pigeon—and the bathroom slats had nesting sprouting from them like tufts of hair from an old man’s ears. (164)

The below mediocre quality of this flat stands in acute contradiction with the spaces of affluence and aesthetic appeal that the narrator describes in the other half of the city. Significantly enough, these localities marked by underclass residents also form the germinating spaces of crime and disorder.

Tejpal paints a darker picture of a more precarious space in the portrayal of the Paharjung railway station—a place that signifies the chaotic transitory space of the city, since the railway station serves as the gateway to the entry and exit from the city. The platform is a fecund space of chaos, consisting of several groups of the urban underbelly who find no place within the inner city space—the petty street vendor who sell “magic potions,” the homeless children, the beggars, the prostitutes, the criminals and drug dealers. Unkempt and disheveled, the platforms are no better than garbage dumps with the “debris of cracked tea kullads, stitched-leaf plates and rough napkins” (300) strewn all over the place. It is also perilous space that lurks with dangers and uncertainties, where the residents have to struggle for their daily lives and are frequently abused, raped and killed. It is a place where the homeless children train themselves in petty criminal acts as well as get involved in organized crime like drug peddling. In such a place the police too break laws and torment the station dwellers, imposing a reign of terror through
exhortations and sexual abuse. Teenagers like Gudiya are gang raped in the station and Dhaka, the young leader of the homeless children’s group is found dismembered on the railway tracks due to a gang war. Tejpal’s depiction of this space of darkness is both frightening and repulsive, and the detail with which he etches out the bleakness of this place evokes immediate comparison with the glitzy, secured, vast and beautiful spaces of the neoliberal city. In an evocative passage, Tejpal describes the temporary night shelter of the station children—the drainage gutter—with great visual minutiae that speaks of the immense deprivation of the station children:

The band moved home again…and was now snugly ensconced in the gutter between platforms four and five…There was a trickle of sludge in the groove at the centre, but the boys had thrown old railway sleepers across it to bury its slime in deep. The iron cover of the manhole had been stolen and sold long ago, and now the entrance to their home was guarded by a cratewood trapdoor, the dozens of nail-heads in its flesh glinting in the midday sun. (338)

Surviving in such inhuman living conditions, the station children can only be stunned when confronted with the city of opulence—resplendent with “dazzling glass-fronted shops and big glowing signs,” magnanimous cinema halls and “roads where big cars shone like diamond” and inhabited by upper class elites “so beautiful, so sweet smelling” (356) that seem almost unreal.

Significantly enough, the core urban space of Delhi stands in contrast not only to its urban underbelly but also to the threatening geographical spaces of dark crime and underworld dealings that lie outside the borders of the urban landscape, on its fringes
shared with UP and Haryana—like Bareily, Noida, the badlands of Meerut and Muzaffarnagar and the villages that are untouched by the urban restructuring. The suburbs and villages surrounding the core city Delhi are both impoverished and dangerous and like the railway station, signify the utter pandemonium that lies outside the safety haven provided by neoliberal urbanism. Cities in India, especially those like Delhi where a large part of the population consists of people who have migrated from the rural areas, have always had a connection with the villages. As Aditya Nigam points out, the postcolonial city has “been marked by a deep and organic connection with the village/countryside, which functions as its 'constitutive outside': what the city is, can only be understood with reference to the non-city, especially rural areas. For those who make their journey to the city, it represents the land of opportunity and promise, however much the realities of decaying urban existence may eventually work towards smashing that dream”(40).

In Tejpal’s novel, the dichotomy between the city and the village is revealed in terms of their comparative orderliness. The city not only stands in contrast to the village in its amenities, Tejpal projects a picture of a rural life fraught with feudalism and violence—a dangerous place lurking right outside the borders of the modernized, orderly city. Tejpal projects the vagaries of a village life still running by the codes of an exploitative feudal order—where land disputes lead to fatal consequences, honor killings are frequent, and where the feudal lords exert their ‘rightful’ power over the peasant’s families through extreme violence and oppression. However, what makes the rural landscape in the novel potentially more violent is the retaliation of the lower sections of
the society. The power structures that divide groups along class and caste lines are highly volatile and the order of society is often disrupted. The crimes of both Chaaku and Hathoda Tyagi are extreme and yet are common occurrences in the turbulent atmosphere of rural violence. While Chaaku pays back his upper class-upper caste tormentors by slicing their entrails (131), his family is raped and butchered in retaliation from the landlords (147). Similarly, Tyagi’s sisters are raped publicly by this rich, landowning relatives—an act Tyagi avenges by smashing the perpetrator’s skull with his massive hammer (414). In a gruesome passage, Tejpal describes another instance of the extreme violence that commonly characterizes the class and caste strives in the villages:

The Gujjar teenager had blown one nulli (barrel) each through both their (landlord’s son) heart. Two days later, the thakur’s brothers had picked up the boy’s sisters and raped them repeatedly before decapitating them and hanging their heads on the palash tree. Only great terror can restore order. A week later, one brother had a hole blasted through his spine. (404)

In comparison to such sheer raw violence of the rural space, the neoliberal city is evidently portrayed as a tamer place, devoid of class wars. Cordoned off in two separate spaces, and the potentially criminal subjectivities of the socio-economically marginalized groups being pushed to the margins, the neoliberal city of Tejpal’s novel projects a controlled order in contrast to the lawlessness and mayhem of the village. Unlike the villages, the power structures of the urban space in the novel are never challenged, nor disrupted. The subaltern classes in the city are regulated through strict social control, and the city never becomes a dangerous place for the upper rungs of the urban society. For
the middle class narrator and his English literate readers as well, the village thus becomes this dangerous space of anarchy and violence, of uncontrolled criminal subjectivities and utter lawlessness that lurk outside the safe haven for elites that the neoliberal city provides.

Harboring two different worlds for the rich and for the poor is however, not the most conspicuous characteristic of the neoliberal city. The urban poor have always experienced a different and bleaker city life than the rich. Simultaneously, for decades together the urban elites have complained and asked for a cleaner city space, cleansed off the poor, unkempt and the dirty. As Nandini Gooptu points out, more than the rural poor it is the urban poor who are seen as a potential threat to public health, political order and stability since the colonial period (The Politics of the Urban Poor 7-8). However, what is more characteristic of a neoliberal city is the magnitude with which the local authorities and the state participate and implement such a vision of the new economic geography of prioritizing the urban elite. The way Tejpal’s Delhi is neatly divided into two quarantined geographical halves of the rich and the impoverished suggests an effective ‘spatial governmentality’ in action. Drawing from Foucault’s concept of “governmentality” as a mechanism of social ordering, Sally Engel Merry defines spatial governmentality as follows:

“They differ substantially from disciplinary forms of regulation in logic and techniques of punishment. Disciplinary regulation focuses on the regulation of persons through incarceration or treatment, while spatial mechanisms concentrate on the regulation of space through excluding offensive behavior. Spatial forms of
regulation focus on concealing or displacing offensive activities rather than eliminating them. Their target is a population rather than individuals. They produce social order by creating zones whose denizens are shielded from witnessing socially undesirable behavior. The individual offender is not treated or reformed, but a particular public is protected. The logic is that of zoning rather than correcting (17).

The same techniques of cordonning off the spaces of the city from the impoverished and the marginal groups seem to be in effect in Tejpal’s description of Delhi. Spatially, the two clearly demarcated halves of Tejpal’s Delhi—the elite and the marginal—can be mapped out in terms of geographical co-ordinates. The elite half of Delhi is geographically concentrated in certain parts of South Delhi like Saket, Vasant Kunj and Greater Kailash, and the gated residential complexes in Dwarka of West Delhi. These are spaces which are essentially marked off by iron gates and private security, where access is limited and exclusive for the elites, and these spaces are distilled off the presence and sight of the unkempt and the poor. Thus the concept of the “carceral cities” is very close to, as MacLeod points out, Steven Flusty’s notion of the “interdictory spaces”, which Flusty describes as spaces designed to “systematically exclude those adjudged to be unsuitable or even threatening [or] people whose class and cultural diverge from those of the builders and their target market (659; qtd in MacLeod 259). On the other hand, the lower classes and the marginal groups are confined to the geographical areas of northern Old Delhi and Kashmere Gate, the Pahargunj railway station and the congested colonies of Rohini and Punjabi Bagh—the wasteland suburbs in North-West Delhi. In sharp
contrast to the “carceral city” spaces of inner Delhi, these spaces of poverty contain the impoverished and the marginal groups who do not fit as citizens of the neoliberal city.

Significantly enough, it is not only the zoning off of polarized spaces that point at the new urban changes; what really characterize the radical transformation of the urban space under neoliberalism are the processes through which such an ordering of population is implemented and maintained. Much like in the real Delhi, the two differential spaces and their respective populations do not intermix in the novel’s narrative geography. The urban underclass subjects hardly breach the boundaries of their assigned spaces and do not ‘contaminate’ the elite spaces of the carceral city. The dividing lines are clearly seen when the homeless children of the Paharjung station confess that their adventures to the main city are strictly limited and they have never gone beyond the congested slums, “the jhuggi-jhopdi colony” and the cheap flea markets of Sadar Bazaar—all of which characterize the low class ghettos within the inner city. Similarly, the rural miscreants like Chaaku and Hathoda, who escape to the big city from their villages, again do not make it to the urban spaces of the politically powerful and the economically affluent. The dangerous and potentially disruptive populace remains confined within the spatial underbelly of the city; they can hardly transgress into the spaces secured for the elites. Thus, not only are the geographical spaces of the city zoned off into separate spaces for the elites and the poor and criminals, the city also implements tangible policies of urban governance that regulate the ‘misfits’ and prevents such excluded citizens from permeating into the city space secured for the entrepreneurial class.
Before we move on to discuss the other modes of spatial governmentality projected in the novel, let us consider what constitutes as “exclusionary citizenship” (MacLeod 604) in the narrative. The misfit citizens of the urban space or the potentially dangerous, criminal “assassins” of the novel are essentially members of the marginal groups—like the orphaned street children, the vagabonds or the beggars—or they belong to a religious minority group like the Muslims, or hail from oppressed castes like the gujjars or belong to the lowest rung of the feudal system as landless laborers. All the criminals share the common experiences of marginalization, the common methods of initiation into crime and similar behavioral patterns that identify them as potentially disruptive. The first assassin profiled in the novel is Chaaku—son of a drunkard, wife-beating army subedar, whose family is socio-economically marginalized as the meager tenants under a powerful landlord, in the remote hinterlands of Haryana. The family is both powerless and poor, is frequently oppressed by the landlords and lives a life of fear and penury. The boy Chaaku, with no entrepreneurial and productive skills, can only survive by violence. Chaaku and his family thus embody immense low value as human capital, and thus exemplify the utter misfits in the neoliberal city.

The same parameters of socio-economic worth and status characterize the other criminals as well. Kabir M exemplifies a life wasted in spite of being provided the right opportunities for social mobility. In spite of his parents’ humble background, Kabir is sent to an English medium school and is expected to have a respectable upper class life. Instead, he proves himself unworthy of making that socio-economic progress, drops out of school, gets involved in petty criminal acts and ends up in jail. Similarly, the
miscreants Kaaliya and Chini both belong to the homeless group of orphaned children residing in the Paharjung station. Dehumanized as “rats,” and living a dangerous life in extreme penury, abuse and violated human rights, these stray children represent the worst possible conditions of human lives on the lowest rung of society. Consequently, with no skills to participate as productive members of the neoliberal market, they are utter misfits in the city that lay beyond the station: “They had no tools to take it on—no language, no knowledge, no contacts, no money” (356). Significantly enough, the novel also sarcastically portrays a different group of high end criminals like Kapoor Saab and Frock Raja who are involved in illegal rackets on national and international level, and yet hold respectable positions in the city due to their power and wealth. Tejpal’s point is thus clear—the question is not about singling out crime itself but rather about identifying and regulating a certain group of underclass ‘criminal’ population who do not fit into the scheme of the neoliberal city. Such neat socio-economic profiles of the identified criminals, corresponding to their marginalized status in society, echo the stereotype of the elite notion of criminal subjectivity, whereby criminality gets inherently associated with one’s socio-economic marginality. The same generalization is applied when poor and marginalized groups are targeted in the neoliberal urban space, where entire groups of marginalized population are identified as potentially dangerous and disruptive. Consequently, they are rendered essential targets of correctional biopolitics and hence subjects of regulatory control.44

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44 Deriving the word from the twin words “bios” and “politicos”, Foucault’s conceptualization of “biopolitics” refers to the political processes of controlling entire human populations—“the emergence of something that is no longer an
This process of securing the urban space from the ‘potentially dangerous’ marginalities can be best understood through the notion of neoliberalism’s ‘underclass thesis’. Popularized in the neoliberal context by Charles Murray in his book *Losing Ground*, which had considerable effect on the Reagan administration, the term ‘underclass’ in neoliberal context refers to the poor sections who inhabit an irredeemably ‘different world,’ whose problems could not be solved through reform or a growing economy (xv). The underclass is essentially defined by their bad behavior and moral deficiency (1), which as Sonia Martin points out, is equated with a conscious choice or agency of subject. Murray thus points out the immense moral depravity and potential dangers of such underclass population in his study of Britain’s poor: “Britain has a growing population of working-aged, healthy people, who live in a different world from the other Britons, who are raising their children to live in it and whose values are now contaminating the life of entire neighborhoods” (4). Similarly, Takis Fotopoulos also aptly sums up the notion of the neoliberal underclass, referring to the victims of neoliberal globalization, consisting of “the unemployed and the marginalized”, those living “close to subsistence level” and particularly the wayward youngsters who have no future: “in a word, the present-day *sans culottes*, who do not belong to any of the anatomo-politics of the human body, but what I would call a “biopolitics” of the human species” (*History of Sexuality* 137). Biopolitics thus aims to treat the population, as Foucault explains, as “a set of coexisting living beings with particular biological and pathological features, and which as such falls under specific forms of knowledge and technique” (474), whereby the authorities of power reach out to dictate norms of living conditions on the citizen-subjects. Biopolitics thus seeks to discipline entire populations into specific modes of life—or as O’Kane and Tripner aptly puts it “biopolitics arises when life itself becomes the objects of structures of power” (xxxi).
established social classes as they have not (yet) been integrated into the social system of the internationalised market economy and its political complement, representative ‘democracy’” (1). Though the underclass thesis is principally a rhetoric of anti-welfare—whereby as Martin asserts “within this framework, income support recipients are viewed as either passive recipients who have been disempowered by the welfare state,… or active recipients who deliberately abuse the welfare system”(5)—it also constructs a terrifying and alienating notion of the poor who are not only morally corrupt, and hence choose a decadent life by their own agency, but also dangerous and disruptive for the rest of the entrepreneur-consumer citizens. The aggressive quarantine and elimination policies for the poor constitute a key process of policing the undesirable underclass in the city space.

Thus, the spatial governmentality of the neoliberal city operates by not only cordonning off spaces but also by monitoring the populations from specific social strata to prevent potential disorder. The regulation of the space thus spells out a new mode of urban governance that seeks to maintain order and render the city safe and attractive to the entrepreneurial, productive class by guarding the core urban spaces from contamination from the beggars, homeless and criminals. As Roy Coleman points out:

Social control strategies enacted in entrepreneurialised landscapes are increasing the divergence of control tasks that traverse public and private sectors and open up spaces for the expansion of ‘crime prevention’ projects which are not necessarily directed at legally defined ‘crime’, but instead bring under punitive
control target groups and individuals deemed incompatible with the neoliberal urban vision. (298)

Tejpal’s novel projects various processes of such urban control against the poor and the marginal, a process that characterizes what Neil Smith famously refers to as a “revanchist city” (The New Urban Frontier 43). Referring to the French word revanche meaning “revenge,” Smith defines the neoliberal urban space as a “revanchist” city, referring to the particularly violent measures employed in the city against the poor, unemployed and the homeless (43). Offering a close study of the ‘zero tolerance policies’ of New York Police Department under Giuliani’s leadership as the trademark policies of a revanchist city, Smith points out how the city officials came down upon the marginal groups, who were identified as criminals and culprits, with almost a ruthless vengeance to ‘cleanse’ the city off these unruly sections (43). Mitchell takes the notion of revanchism further to conceptualize on the “post-justice” city (81)—a city which is “no longer defined by the struggle for social justice … instead, [it is] a question of the best way to exterminate homeless people” (311). Tejpal’s novel cogently delineates three processes through which spatial governmentality is effectively employed to secure the city space for the ‘desirable’ elite class—through the methods of eviction, paternalistic intervention and surveillance.

Most neoliberal cities have a history of eviction of the marginalized groups from the zones marked for the elites. Calling it a process of “accumulation by dispossession” (34), David Harvey explains the process as a method of capturing land for private use and “the removal of much of the working class and other unruly elements from the city
centre, where they constituted a threat to public order and political power” (“The Right to the City” 33). Aditya Nigam points out the long trajectory of slum demolition in Delhi the 1970s and 1980s that culminated into a massive mass eviction during the developmental drive in the early 2000s, that saw the displacement of around 50,000 low income workers (45). Similarly, Gautam Bhan points out that between “1990 and 2003, 51,461 houses were demolished in Delhi under “slum clearance” schemes. Between 2004 and 2007 alone, however, at least 45,000 homes were demolished, and since the beginning of 2007, eviction notices have been served on at least three other large settlements” (128). The displacement and relocation of the urban poor in specific spatial grids in the neoliberal city, project the radical measures of population control implemented not only by the city planning agencies or the municipal bodies, but as Bhan points out, even by the judiciary (133).

Tejpal’s novel narrates a telling instance of similar eviction of the snake charmers from the metropolitan centers of Delhi and Bombay who not only face the gradual extinction of their age old profession in a modern city, but are also criminalized and their profession is declared as illegal. Rendered outcasts by the urban authorities, these groups of snake charmers wander as vagabonds on the fringes of the modern city and never succeed to claim a space inside it:

Times have changed and [the snake charmers]…had fallen foul of democracy and modernity…This large, wide world had no place for them, and wherever they went--they were unwelcome. Everywhere there was a…policeman to shoo them away, everywhere he saw his father and uncles beg and plead for a stretch of field
where they could set up a camp…they were abject men, in soiled sweaty clothing, itinerant beggars, squatting on their haunches, their hands folded in supplication, asking for a temporary patch of the earth that no one was any more willing to give (308-309).

The snake charmers’ plight exemplifies the way these low-income groups are constantly denied a place to settle in the city, often driven off beyond the boundaries of the city. Ironically, too young to understand the violence meted out by the city to his community, Kaaliya, the young boy of a snake charmers’ group, keeps dreaming of the city as the utopian space of escape. Kaaliya’s dream to settle in a posh area within the city is ironic in the way the modern city remains only a coveted but impossible dream space for the poor, ‘unwanted’ population like Kaaliya who are outcasts in the city.

Apart from eviction, the novel also projects an alternative method of equally problematic method of governmentality through the interventionist efforts that seek to relocate these underclass groups in the city to a ‘better’ life. G DeVerteuil and et all observe in the context of the urban restructuring in New York, that in contrast to the revanchist methods in Los Angeles, the response to homelessness in New York was a more interventionist process, whereby the homeless people were forcibly removed to the city’s winter shelters with the justification that it’s “somehow in their own best interest” (649). Such ‘altruistic’ intervention of helping out the poor conforms to what Lawrence Mead calls as “new paternalism” that refers to “social policies aimed at poor that attempt to reduce poverty… by directive and supervisory means” (2). The concept is built on the presumption that the poor are incapable of looking after their own well-being, hence they
mandatorily “need direction if they are to live constructively” (Mead 2), whereby the government must step in as an interventionist, disciplinary authority and in “effect treat[s] adults like children” (Mead 26). On a similar strain, Soss, Fording and Schram situate “paternalism” in the context of the neoliberal market as a mode of disciplining that aims at poverty governance (24). 45 However, the process of poverty governance does not necessarily signify upward social mobility and an emancipatory intervention for the poor. Rather, as several scholars have pointed out, paternalistic interventions to help the poor get employed amount to the “regimentation” of underclass citizens into the low wage labor market (Sassen; Beck; Schram; Bevir and Bevir; Soss, Fording, Schram). Schram points out the contradictory implications of this notion of including the poor in the labor market:

Labor activation policies are often justified in a terms of helping the unemployed overcome their “social exclusion.” Yet, the emphasis of workfare programs is to

45 Soss, Fording and Schram explain further: “In referring to paternalist governance, our use of the term departs from the liberal definition in three important ways. First, we begin with political relations rather than unencumbered individuals, emphasizing that paternalism is an authority relationship based on unequal status and power (Smiley 1989). It is not a form of “interference” with individuals whose desires exist, somehow, prior to social relations. Rather, as the father-child metaphor suggests, it is a relationship that makes the individual’s development through social relations into a self-conscious project pursued by a directive and supervisory authority. Second, although paternalism may involve a “person being coerced,” power may operate and be exercised in a variety of ways that do not require coercion of a resistant individual (Hayward 2000; Barnett and Duvall 2005). Third, because governing arrangements are always supported by multiple rationales, paternalist governance cannot be limited to activities “justified by reasons referring exclusively” to the well being of the governed person or group. In practice, paternalist poverty governance is motivated by a mix of broad public purposes, particularistic interests, and beliefs about what is good for the poor”. (24)
get the unemployed to make “rapid attachment” to the paid labor force, even if it means taking low-wage jobs. As a result, labor activation policies risk helping the poor overcome their social exclusion in ways that re-inscribe their subordination (“Uncaring Neoliberal Paternalism” 5)

Asserting that poverty governance does not attempt to abolish poverty, Soss and et all argue that its main purpose is to ensure significant contribution from the socio-economically weak and make them participants in the market: “they [government] restrict aid to encourage the poor to take up work…They create incentives and services to smooth the path to preferred behavior…through these and other methods the governments work continually to manage low income populations and transform them to cooperative subjects of the market and polity”(1-2). Simultaneously, Soss and et all point out, paternalistic interventions into poverty governance thus do not assert the rolling back of the state to make way for the market, rather it testifies the expansion of the state’s activism as an affirmative agent of the market (46). Interestingly enough, Soss and et all also note that contemporary poverty governance is conducted through a “network of actors who are positioned in quasi-market relations” (3), instead of a single body of the government. Consequently, as the novel projects, government officials, community workers, NGOs—who Dhaka condescendingly call “the fucking pimps of goodness” (345)— all offer to uplift the underclass by offering them a place in the economy, but essentially as low wage workers that signifies no substantial social mobility. Neoliberal poverty governance inculcates work incentive among the poor, only to often push them to the low paying and menial jobs. By including the underclass in the folds of the market,
the state ensures that the potentially dangerous class is not only left alone but that they also become participants in the market. While nothing really changes for the poor regarding their socio-economic status, the process ensures a steady supply of low wage labor to the market and seeks to control the potentially disruptive sections of the population, so as to secure the city space for the wealthier clientele.

*The Story* narrates many instances of such interventionist efforts that attempt to transform the ‘non-productive’ poor groups to ‘productive’ members of the economy, however with a specific motive. Thus, while the NRI ‘fannekhans’ or animal rights activists claim to usher the snake charmers to a new way of life by calling for an abolition of their itinerant trade, Kaliya’s mother mocks at the façade of such ‘philanthropic’ projects: “Jobs! Yes of course, my illiterate lord is now going to be put into a pant and a suit, and will sit in an office and sign papers” (314). The very promise of a white-collar job for an illiterate snake charmer sounds outlandish to Kaliya’s mother, who instantly rejects the veneer of such a hopeful future. Similarly, the real nature of such apparently altruistic drives is promptly exposed in the context of the homeless station children: “There were spies of social agencies whose weapons were soft words and rosy dreams, who talked with sincere eyes about goodness and education, who wanted to pull the boys into their hospices and domesticate them into cooks and guards and gardeners” (345). Therefore, Dhaka proclaims in frustration, the station children are co-opted into jobs that can only make them slaves in some rich man’s house—all serving tea and wiping tables and washing dishes (345). *The Story* thus brings out the defeating purpose of such philanthropic drives to employ the poor, for the opportunities of social mobility are not
only restricted, they also assert another form of hierarchy between the upper classes and the low wage working classes, with the economic disparity remaining constant.

Along with these, a more radical form of spatial governmentality is reached through surveillance of the criminals and by penalizing the disorderly crowd. Neoliberalism creates a unique surveillance society where populations are regulated through close monitoring. As Torin Monahan aptly sums it up—“from biometric technologies at airports and borders, to video surveillance in schools, to radio frequency identification tags in hospitals, to magnetic strips in welfare food cards, surveillance technologies integrate into all aspects of modern life, but with varied effects for different populations” (x). Surveillance has become, as Roy Coleman points out, a frequent method especially for crime ‘control’. Coleman reminds us that the focus of such regulatory surveillance is essentially on the ‘street’ and the ‘street people’, which reinforces the definitions of ‘crime’, ‘risk’ and ‘harm’ as “emanating solely from powerless and disaffected people” (227). Surveillance techniques, especially through close circuit cameras that routinely monitor the streets and the urban population have been a defining feature of the social control in the generic neoliberal city46 (Soja; Coleman). The objective is to monitor and minimize the risk of crime, and prevent its occurrence, rather than to punish crime after the act. A particularly proactive role in invigilating and monitoring the marginal is played by the state machineries of penal

46 Though research on surveillance studies are highly concentrated in the case study of US and UK cities like Liverpool, the increasing adaptation of the Western mode of urbanization into Indian cities call for similar theoretical paradigms.
disciplining, especially the police, whose relationship with the poor communities, as Samara points out, have become increasingly violent in neoliberal contexts all over the world. While surveillance techniques ensure that the potentially disruptive subjects are closely monitored and the ‘suspicious’ ones are often detained for questioning, police disciplining of the underclass citizens in the neoliberal era can range to more penal forms of regulation, from the US model of mass incarceration—which leans more on the idea of segregation and punishment—to the European model of disciplining the poor through police and courts, which obeys the logic of ‘panoptic’ rather than vengeance (Wacquant 17). The situation is more complicated when seen in the context of India, where current the police force is constructed on the protocols of the colonial police force of the British Raj and has long been associated with corruption, their subservience to the politically and economically powerful, oppression, and physical abuse of the ‘criminals’ to the point of violating human rights. The already strained relationship of the commoners with the police is thus heightened in a neoliberal city, which sanctions revanchist measures.

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47 Wacquant points out the “difference between the United States and France (and the countries of continental Europe more generally): the penalization of poverty à la française is mainly effected by means of the police and the courts, rather than through the prison. It obeys a logic that is more panoptic than retributive or segregative, Correspondingly, the social service bureaucracies are called on to take an active part in it since they possess the informational and human means to exercise a close surveillance of “problem populations” - this is what I call social panopticism” (17) However, he also asserts that the difference between the two methods are valid only if the latter methods of surveillance are meant to improve the “life chances” and employment options of the residents, else the patrolling police will just increase arrests and penal sentences and thus, in the end, lead to the incarcerated population.
In Tejpal’s city, the police appear in multifaceted roles—as panoptical surveyors of the urban space, as faithful private guards to the important elite citizens, and as violent perpetrators of incarceration—but all of which comply with the larger neoliberal goal of penalizing poverty and distilling the city space for the productive, wealthier citizens. *The Story* projects an evocative picture of the all pervasive but invisible network of surveillance that monitors the city and its inhabitants. Much of the surveillance work of the police in the novel is done as a protectionist measure to guard the safety of the socially respectable, middle class narrator, whose safety becomes a national concern after a failed attempt on his life. Members of the police force are employed as his private guards, the state almost serving as a personal protector for its more affluent citizens. As Huthyam Singh, the policeman in charge of the narrator’s security comments: “People like you are very important for the country. It is our job to make sure that not a hair on your body’s harmed. You are very safe”(39). The superfluous paraphernalia of security and the sheer number of policemen employed to protect just a single person appear both preposterous and wasteful; it also echoes the practice of policing the wealthy neighborhoods by recruiting armed private personnel in many US cities. The vigilant policemen in the novel are referred to as the “shadows”, referring to their near-invisibility and haunting omnipresence while they maintain a constant gaze on the narrator and his surroundings. While they are meant to guard the narrator, who was the potential target of a group of assassins, their vigil extends much beyond the immediate context of the

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48 see Jody Ray Bennett “Privatizing the Police: A Developing Model in the U.S.A”
narrator. Instead, as the narrator gradually realizes, the expanse of their surveillance encompasses the whole city and monitors its farthest streets. Significantly enough, there are also direct references to the extensive surveillance techniques used to control crime in the megacity. The plan to assassination the narrator is foiled by Delhi Police’s diligent methods of tapping cell phones as well as by the undercover secret agents who were patrolling the city borders for potential disorder (495). Tejpal etches a Delhi that teems with such panoptican gazes of the police, constantly monitoring even the private lives of its citizens in order to maintain the order of the urban space.

The vigilant police and their monitoring gaze, however, conform to milder forms of social control by the police force. The underbelly of the Indian city also confronts a more violent, vengeful police force that incarcerate and brutally suppress the low class, potentially ‘criminal’ populations in a manner that fits the objectives of the “post-justice” city—a city where the marginal groups are excluded to the point of being deprived of any rights at all. Thus in Tejpal’s novel, the policemen invoke immense terror among the homeless snake charmers and the orphan street urchins alike, acting as the immediate purveyors of the city’s repressive policies. In a disturbing passage, Tejpal also describes how the police inflict brutalities on young, low class boys like Kabir, solely as a retribution to the ‘miscreants’ personal feuds with the powerful. Arrested for no apparent reason, the police torture Kabir to the point of castrating him, and then falsely charge him for serious offenses under the Arms Act (251-254). He is put away to jail promptly with concocted evidence produced by the police. Justice really seems to elude the underclass ‘criminals’ of the city who are again picked up randomly from their haunts and
incarcerated in a speedy way, often in spite of lack of evidence. Waquant argues in *Prisons of Poverty* that in all the countries where the neoliberal ideology of submission to the “free market” has spread, one observes that the state takes up a role of a collective organization of violence, whereby the police and the penal institutions seek to control the dominated and the disruptive through incarceration (87-88). In Tejpal’s novel too, the potentially disruptive population are sent away to jail on the sole discretion of the police, irrespective of whether they are guilty or not. Law becomes just another way of repressing a targeted population, specifically those who do not fit into the vision of the modern global city. Tejpal’s novel thus presents an evocative picture of Delhi as a neoliberal city, which not only embodies an urban space that prioritizes entrepreneurial productivity through the spatial governmentality of the landscape of the city but also a cityscape that secures itself through social control that attempt to construct, interpret, and regulate criminal subjectivities to maintain the reign of neoliberalism.

Apart from these, the novel also embodies another crucial form of social control by surveillance through the discourses of profiling the criminals in the narrative itself. True to its title, the novel is indeed the story of the assassins, but not necessarily a view from below. Rather, the five stories of the five assassins, that intersperse the dominant narrative of the middle-class urban experience of the narrator, appear more as criminal biographies than subaltern testimonies. There are detailed, third person, unimpassioned narrations that examine and carefully describe their lives, behavioral patterns, the social forces and the environmental factors that shaped their criminality. As Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish*, the conversion of the criminal into a discursive subject for both
scientific and social study constituted a significant method of monitoring crime as early as in the 19th century. The objective was to render the criminal a subject of hegemonic knowledge and one who can be grasped, contained and ameliorated, and hence can be controlled (19). The criminal biographies of Tejpal’s novel that seek to impart ‘real knowledge’ about the assassins echo the discursive genres of crime literature and journalistic stories on criminals that Foucault talks about--- whereby not only were crime stories turned into commodities of consumption but they also affected an appropriation of criminality in acceptable forms and thus more feasible for correction. Interestingly enough, it is not only the narrative pattern of the novel that imparts this sense of the criminals converted to discursive subjects, but as the novel informs, the five character sketches are indeed descriptive profiles that circulate as a discourse among the police, the lawyer, the activist, the journalist, and the other authorities of social control. The novel itself thus becomes a mode of surveillance, gazing into the inner lives and activities of the criminals. As the criminals are scrutinized closely—both within the narrative and in the process of reading, the discursive trope of criminality signifies more subtle and deeper forms of the ‘panopticism’ of the neoliberal city. Drawing mainly on Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* and the other panoptic theories of understanding literature, I discuss in the next section how the narrative and form of crime fiction itself reflects a process of literary voyeurism in sync with the culture of neoliberal surveillance, depicted in novels like Vikram Chandra’s *Sacred Games*.

Crime fiction and the Panopticon in *Sacred Games*
Sacred Games is the third novel of the California based Vikram Chandra who already has two more successful novels—Red Earth And Pouring Rain: A Novel, Love And Longing In Bombay: Stories—to his credit. Bid at an exorbitant price among New York publishers, this enormous 900 page long novel narrates the dark side of Mumbai and the motley world of criminals, the film industry, drug and sex rackets, police networks and the immense fecundity of the Mumbai underworld. The book was an instant favorite among critics, bagging several literary awards like the Crossword Award for English Fiction for 2006 and the Salon Book Awards for 2007, and featured as the "10 Best Asian Books of 2006," Time (Asia Edition), "Best Fiction of 2006," Guardian (USA), and "Books of the Year," The Independent (UK). The novel has been praised for being a stunning revelation of the underbelly of Mumbai and for its detailed depiction of the criminal underworld. While New York Times’ reviewer Patricia Brown calls it “The Author’s Vision Of The Mean Streets Of Mumbai,” the review on NPR asserts that “to enter the world of author Vikram Chandra's new book, Sacred Games, is to be immersed in the crime and corruption of India's financial and movie capital” (“An Epic of Mumbai’s Underworld”). Yet, to read Sacred Games as an author’s faithful documentation of the city’s dark underside is to read the novel too simplistically. The significance of Sacred Games as a modern novel of new India lies in the way the aesthetic techniques in the narrative form embody tenets of neoliberal surveillance and create a narrative panopticon, which can best be understood through a Foucauldian paradigm.
The novel is a cops-and-criminal story, centering on the detective figure of police inspector Sartaj Singh and Ganesh Gaitonde, the sought after gangster kingpin of the dreaded criminal syndicate G-Company. Sartaj, one of the very few Sikhs on the Mumbai police force, is a forty year old, divorced man who stands out with his emphatic markers of identity through his turban and beard. Though honest and committed to his job, he often brushes along the dark alleys of the underbelly, has personal contacts among the outlaws and knows the underworld like the back of his hand. Having failed in the past to track Gaitonde, Sartaj sets out to find the legendary boss of the G-Company after he gets an anonymous phone call revealing his secret hide-out. However, when Sartaj reaches there, he finds that Gaitonde has locked himself up in a bunker, demanding to speak only to Sartaj. The rest of the story follows as a combination of Gaitonde’s own confessions about his life, Gaitonde’s suicide, Sartaj’s investigation into Gaitonde’s contacts and past, a revelation of Gaitonde’s secrets, and a recapitulation of a dramatic murder. The novel teems with several other characters revealing the multifaceted aspects of the Mumbai urban life—the dance bars, the lower middle class life of the constables, the chawls or slums, the network of religious gurus, and the corrupt politicians. However the main focus of the novel is on Gaitonde’s recounting of his early days, the genesis and summation of his criminal career and his ultimate death. Sartaj thus plays the typical detective hero who uncovers the truths and stands in sharp contrast to Gaitonde, the seasoned professional criminal.

In both its form and content, Chandra’s novel proclaims a self-confessed emulation of the nineteenth century social realist novels and detective fictions. As the
description on the blurb of the book reads: “Drawing inspiration from the classics of nineteenth-century fiction, mystery novels, Bollywood movies and Chandra’s own life and research on the streets of Mumbai, Sacred Games evokes with devastating realism the way we live now but resonates with the intelligence and emotional depth of the best of literature”. The similarities are evident in elements of ‘realism’ and the faithfulness with which the novel delineates the intricate ‘realities’ of the society. Most reviewers praising the novel focus on this element of ‘realism’ and Chandra’s expert craft in laying bare the hidden underbelly of India. Thus, the judges for the Crossword award for English fiction, Anita Roy, Mukul Kesavan and Shoma Chaudhury, asserted their choice of the book in recognition of Chandra’s quality as “a master of the close-up – zooming to capture every nuance and detail of his characters lives” (“Citation by Judges”). Similarly, the reviewer for The Independent (UK), Soumya Bhattacharya points out the exemplary realism of the novel, calling it an “excursion into the pleasures of realism: the kind of psychological realism that descends from 19th-century European and English fiction”. Frequent comparisons are drawn between Chandra’s narrative and dark world of social realism of Dickens’ crime novels. Thus, while Jane Shilling’s review for The Daily Telegraph (UK) compares Sacred Games with Bleak House, asserting that Chandra’s Dickensian trait is evident in “the ability to enlist an entire city -- in this case, Bombay (or Mumbai, the novel uses the terms interchangeably) -- as a character in his drama”, Boyd Tonkin for Independent (UK) opines that the book “unspools with Dickensian brio and at Dickensian length, but seldom loses its touch for street-smart observation and suspense.” Similarly, for reviewer Karl Pohrt of Shaman Drums, the novel evokes
Mumbai “with the same vivid intensity that Dickens brings to his descriptions of London.” Such repeated invocations of literary realism, as a stylistic technique of Sacred Games, raise a very significant point regarding the relationship of the novel with panopticism. Though literary realism is too ambiguous and multifaceted a term to be defined in totality, I intend to single out its distinctive stylistic features of ‘realistic’ representation and its implication as a mode of surveillance.49

Emerging in the nineteenth and early twentieth century works of Dickens, Balzac, Zola and other European writers of the urban novels who reflected life as it is, literary realism had a distinct relationship with the changing socio-economic conditions of the contemporary period. As Nancy Armstrong points out, such novels respond to the emergence of “new wealth”—asserting that “what consequently emerge as real from these fictionalized accounts of individual lives shaped by capitalism is what might be called the social geography of the city itself” (329). Thus the society in flux, the new realities were thus captured as faithfully as one could, often going beyond what was considered to be “aesthetically permissible” (Kearns 3). Some scholars like Pam Morris suggests that the trope of realism or “fidelity of representation” echoes the effects of another emerging art form into literature—the art of photography (5). As she points out: “Realist novels developed as a popular form during the nineteenth century alongside the other quickly representation of photography. This coincidence may have encouraged a

49 One remembers the epistolary exchange between Anna Sergher and Georg Lukacs, where Sergher assiduously asks Lukacs “please explain once again what you mean exactly by realism” and yet was pretty discontent with his reply. [Collected in Lukacs’ Probleme der Realisms, quoted in Theories of Literary Realism (3)]
pictorial or photographic model of truth as correspondence” (5). The writer thus assumes the role of an omniscient seer—often neutral like the camera—who with an incisive vision and a “forensic attention to the tangible components of his environment” (Kearns 11) scans the world around himself and records it with all its flaws. Apparently objective, the narrator’s piercing gaze brings out the contrasting facets of the urban space, like the mutually exclusive worlds of Dedlock’s estates in Chesney Wold and the murky streets where Jo lives in Dicken’s *Bleak House*. The realist novels would often focus on the dark underside of the society—as Nancy Armstrong puts it: “Realism portrays the city as an illegible terrain resembling Henry Morton Stanley’s “darkest Africa” in its capacity to trap individuals in dangerous positions and choreograph a predatory relationship among them” (329). While literary realism often projected representations of the poor sections of the society and their marginal existence in general, the violence and darkness of the murky underbelly, the disarray of the streets and a more closer focus on the criminal subject form an integral part particularly in the crime fictions of the realist school. Significantly, the figure of the criminal or the delinquent subject in realist crime fictions was most commonly placed in contrast to the figure of the law enforcing detective, who not only echoed Victorian middle class values and morality about criminality, but also embodied the conflicting realms of the contrasting economic classes in a transforming economic system (D.A Miller; Megan Abbot; John Scaggs; Phillis Betz).

Though it will be misleading to label crime literature, and its subgenre detective fiction, as distinctly a nineteenth century phenomenon, the proliferation of crime novels or the stories of the criminal characters as popular forms of literature in nineteenth
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century is strongly tied to the changing notions of penalty and social control during that time. Since it coincides with a socio-historical period of the emergence of a bourgeoisie-capitalist society and an age marked for its repressive social control, the genre of crime fiction has too often been read as a mode of social control — by major detective fiction scholars of the early 1980s like D.A. Miller, Dennis Porter, and Mark Seltzer — through the lens of Foucault’s theorization of the panopticon and the discourse of criminality in 19th century in *Discipline and Punish*. However, the panoptican theorists or “panopticon Foucauldians” as Richard Hull calls them, have been criticized in recent scholarship (see Hull; Reitz) for reading the social conditions and literature of 19th century Britain with Foucault’s observations primarily based on French history and through a convoluted application of Foucaldian paradigms of sociological theories into literary studies. Thus, while Reitz strongly asserts that “in his discussion of panopticism as a disciplinary mechanism, Foucault is certainly not concerned with detective fiction” (xx), Miller himself explains in the foreword to *The Novel and the Police*, the most obvious problem of claiming fictional works as part of the operative panopticon: “the most notable reticence in Foucault’s work concerns precisely the reading of literary texts and literary institutions, which, though often and suggestively cited in passing, are never given a role to play within the disciplinary processes under consideration” (viii). With so many issues with the basic theoretical paradigm, one may ask what then is the efficacy of my methodology in attempting to read Indian crime fiction of the neoliberal age through the lens of a dated literary scholarship of the 1980s that itself seems to misplace social theories of French conditions into literary readings on texts of Britain?
My argument for this reading is threefold—Firstly, I argue that though temporally different, neoliberalism is grounded in many of the tenets of nineteenth century liberalism; and with its emphasis on surveillance and biopolitics, the neoliberal condition also echoes the notions of social control of 19th century Europe (See Coleman, O’Malley; John Pratt). Significantly enough, the nineteenth century anxiety about crime and the notions of criminality projecting the socio-economic tensions of the period find their echo in the current socio-economic tensions of the neoliberal age, and the subsequent projection of the anxiety on the figure of the criminal. As Jodi Dean points out the symbolic import of the figure of the criminal in neoliberalism, which like the nineteenth century fixation about criminals, embody the changing dynamics of wealth and deprivation. Thus he asserts:

\[\text{The criminal is imagined as the monstrous instrument of deprivation…Scholars attend to the proliferation of crime dramas on television, the spectacle of criminality that drives local news,....What my analysis of fantasy in neoliberal ideology adds is insight into the way the criminal is a strange attractor for displaced anxieties around the brutality of the neoliberal economy. Criminals seem particularly horrifying figures precisely because they are figures for the Real of [sic] loss. (72)}\]

Consequently, contemporary Indian urban crime fiction can perhaps be safely read through the paradigms of 19th century English crime fiction and its social conditions, at least in terms of the concept of criminality being conflated with the underclass, the anxiety around the criminal and the cultural import of such literature.
Secondly, these Indian novels essentially use the narrative technique of literary realism that is steeped in what Jeffrey Mehlman calls as the “fantasy of surveillance” (124), whereby the narrative authority of the omniscient narrator is itself reminiscent of the power of the panopticon. It is therefore imperative that we read the burgeoning trend of the contemporary realist novels in the light of the panoptical significance of the genre itself. Thirdly, contrary to Miller’s claim that Foucault himself does not say anything about crime fiction, Foucault does assert the significance of the literature of crime or the “aesthetic rewriting of crime” (68) that emerged in concurrence with a time when the corporeal punishment for the condemned was taken over by more covert ways of social control through a discourse of criminality. The literature of crime in novelistic accounts thus becomes a significant trope of constructing and disseminating concepts of criminality and the criminal subject, and falls in sync with the methods of panopticism that sought to refine the penitentiary techniques.

The concept of panopticism in Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, though has its roots in the architectural particularities of Bentham’s panopticon, signifies protocols of structural disciplining that is implemented through different levels of society. Thus, the panopticon is a method of arranging and observing the miscreants or the potentially disruptive sections of the society for a better understanding of these categories. Marking a shift from the sovereign modes of power to the non-sovereign modes—one that he describes in his 2003 lectures as “presupposed a closely meshed grid of material coercions rather than the physical existence of a sovereign” (Foucault 36). Foucault
emphatically points out in *Discipline and Punish* the decentralized network of panopticism:

While on the one hand, the disciplinary establishments increase, their mechanisms have a certain tendency to become ‘de-institutionalized’, to emerge from the closed fortresses in which they once functioned and to circulate in a ‘free’ state; the massive, compact disciplines are broken down into flexible methods of control, which may be transferred and adapted. Sometimes the closed apparatuses add to their internal and specific function a role of external surveillance, developing around them a whole margin of lateral controls. (211)

Though immensely nebulous, the panoptic system is essentially based on the central notion of surveillance and the ‘visibility’ of the target subjects. In contrast to the miscreants who must remain visible, the figures of disciplining authority observing the miscreants themselves remain in invisibility—rendering the target subject as the sole “object of information, never a subject in communication “(Foucault 200). While

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50 Foucault distinguishes the non-sovereign from the sovereign: “An important phenomenon occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the appearance – one should say the invention – of a new mechanism of power which had very specific procedures, completely new instruments, and very different equipment. It was, I believe, absolutely incompatible with relations of sovereignty. This new mechanism of power applies primarily to bodies and what they do rather than to the land and what it produces. It was a mechanism of power that made it possible to extract time and labour, rather than commodities and wealth, from bodies. It was a type of power that was exercised through constant surveillance and not in discontinuous fashion through chronologically defined systems of taxation and obligation. It was a type of power that presupposed a closely meshed grid of material coercions rather than the physical existence of a sovereign, and it therefore defined a new economy of power based upon the principle that there had to be an increase both in the subjugated forces and in the forces and efficacy of that which subjugated them” (35). [*The Global Panopticon*]
Bentham’s model of the panopticon and Foucault’s theorization of discipline are essentially placed against the context of nineteenth century Europe, several contemporary theorists of neoliberalism have often found astounding similarities between the disciplining methods of the current free market and governments and the increasing popularity of surveillance as a method to control criminalities in the neoliberal context. Stephen Gill, one of the major scholars of the panoptic theory in the context of neoliberal globalization, argues that “disciplinary neoliberalism” is intensified through an application of the practices of surveillance or panopticism (2), whereby not only do databases, satellites, bar code scanners, closed circuit TVs, telecommunications intercepts are used as effective tools of gathering data about the population by the market and the government, but they are also used for more coercive purposes like controlling “the actions and rhythms of workers and to keep them monitored genetically and biologically” (19). In a similar strain, Massimo de Angelis finds overwhelming similarities in Bentham’s model of the panopticon and Frederick Hayek’s conceptualization of the free market, asserting that in both Bentham’s and Hayek’s order, power’s knowledge of individual actions and plan is not perfect, and both the rationale behind both the systems

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51 Gill cites an example: “A contemporary example of this is the way production tasks are redesigned so that they can be performed by robots, so that the role of humans in the factory is reduced to filling in for the robots when the robot malfunctions - a development akin to the nightmare of Fritz Lang’s Metropolis. New auto assembly lines run by General Motors embody this idea, and they are accompanied by mandatory drug testing and urine analysis which in effect, are designed to mandate the elimination of workers who, it is claimed, are unfit to work to the technologically and managerially defined rhythms” (19).
is to tap into this knowledge. In both cases, this “co-optation of knowledge and choices is at the basis of the system's maximisation of efficiency” (Angelis 4).

Similarly, for urban geographers like Soja and Wacquant, the neoliberal urban space embodies a panopticon in its contemporary form. Thus, while Soja asserts that “amidst its multiplicities of expressions, every city is a panoptican, a collection of surveillance modes designed to impose and maintain a particular model of conduct and disciplined adherence on its inhabitants” (235), Wacquant studies “punitive panopticism” in the way sex offenders are targeted and disciplined in the contemporary neoliberal city (209). Apart from these theorists, the notion of the panoptical surveillance in contemporary society has been theorized in various other ways. Oscar Gandy’s work on the “panoptic sort” studies how today's panoptic operations of the state, which gathers and classifies information about its citizens, “make use of an almost unlimited amount of personal information to manage the social and economic systems within their spheres” (abstract). Moreover, scholars like Mark Andrejevich, Garreth Power, Murray and Ouellette, take up the notion of panoptical surveillance as embedded in the cultural products like the reality TV shows such as Big Boss that discipline and regulate people according to the tenets of neoliberal subjectivity. Thus, reading the contemporary neoliberal condition against the Foucauldian paradigm is an effective way to understand how modes of citizenship and the operative methods of social control get shaped by the current changes brought in by the globalization of capital. The narrative of Vikram

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52 I will engage into a detailed discussion about the complex and significant paradigm of ‘neoliberal subjectivity’ in my next chapter.
Chandra’s expository novel *Sacred Games* itself embodies a form of panoptical surveillance—thereby I call it a *panoptical novel*—which finally leads to the construction of the notion of criminal subjectivity in a neoliberal urban space.

In terms of its narrative technique, the form of the realist crime fiction itself has often been read as what Jeffrey Mehlman calls the “fantasy of surveillance”. As he explains:

> we may well agree with Lukacs that the future of the novel is with the excellence of vision which is the distinguishing mark of realism. But simultaneously we…are suggesting here the existence of what might be called in Michel Foucault’s term an “epistemologico-juridical formation”…if he is correct in positing a politics implicit in the very discursiveness of every form of knowledge; and if we may accept his suggestion that the very epistemophilic passion to see or examine human reality, which orients our human sciences, is shot through with a fantasy of surveillance, then we have located a politico-literary point of intersection between the “future of novel” and the “future of France” (123-125)

Thus for Mehlman, the very form of the realist novel invokes a sort of panopticism that is as politicized as the epistemological endeavors of the human sciences, thus contributing to the Foucauldian connection between knowledge and power. Mehlman’s notion of the “fantasy of surveillance” in the realist fiction is thus not a simple desire to see social reality as it is, but rather the perusal of a particular ‘reality’—the unknown hidden ‘realities’ of the criminal subjectivities—the knowledge of which of is pursued as an act of discourse. One of the most formative works on the politics of literary surveillance,
especially in the writings on the underworld, comes from Mark Seltzer who theorizes on what he calls as the cult of the “spy mania” (506). Seltzer’s focus is particularly on the ways the urban underworld becomes the object of literary scrutiny that corroborate the methods of police surveillance with more subtle methods of power and coercion through literary texts. Thus, referring to the nineteenth century monographs on the London underworld—like George Sims’ *The Mysteries of Modern London* and *How the Poor Live and Horrible London*, Jack London’s study of the London slums in *The People of the Abyss*, as well as fictional works like Henry James’ *Princess Casamassima*—Seltzer points out an effective trend of surveiling the urban underbelly through the observation, dissemination and consumption of the literature on the underworld. Subsequently, the mystery and fear of the underworld, or what Seltzer calls as the “fantastic paranoia” (26), was responded with “an attempt to book London’s unrecorded mysteries and to supplement the official police record through unrestricted lay policing” (26). A particularly strong resemblance between the police surveillance and the literary and journalistic scrutiny emerge in the methods of gathering information, which often employ many police tactics like private espionage, tapping of sources, undercover operations and interviewing the subjects.

In talking about his underworld explorations for *Sacred Games*, Chandra too reveals how he tapped multiple sources that include his adventurous visits to the dens of real life underworld dons like Arun Gawli and other people associated with organized

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53 The term is originally taken from George Sim’s *The Mysteries of Modern London* and *How the Poor Live and Horrible London* where he proclaims “We do not suffer from the spy mania here” (81).
crime. Though he vows to keep their identities private in his novel, he gives a sensational
description of the entire exciting trip to the underworld in a post publication article:

I met one afternoon with Arun Gawli, one of the great Bombay mafia Dons. I
went to meet him at Dagdichawl, his fortress-home in the heart of the old mill
area of Parel. I waited, sitting on a plastic chair alongside other supplicants, under
a grey hulk of a building. Above us, from a balcony, Gawli’s boys, his young
soldiers, watched. Finally, I was led up a narrow staircase, and a left turn took us
into a large gold-Formica-paneled room, where I waited again, sitting on a shiny
maroon sofa under a very large silvery chandelier. The walls were covered with
large gold-framed pictures of gods and goddesses. Gawli was a fervent Shiva-
bhakt…It felt like a durbar hall, but Gawli himself was a very small man dressed
in a white shirt, white pajamas, and a Nehru cap. He was very polite, and it was
only when he spoke of his mortal enemy, the mafia boss Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar,
that his eyes grew still and hard, and I felt a chill. (“The Cult of Authenticity”)

Chandra’s description of his meeting with another ferocious mafia, Hussain Ustra, is even
more dramatic and sensational. As Chandra and his crime journalist friend waited in a
dangerous mafia-ridden locality, his cell phone phone rang and he was directed through a
web of narrow lanes and shady corners to a dungeon like building to Ustra. He describes
seeing a host of close circuit tvs spanning multiple cameras that signified the mafia’s own
network of surveillance. After a long process of security check, Chandra finally meets
with Ustra and describes him as a “slightly paunchy man, dressed in a tailored white shirt
and pants. He would have been completely at home at a Nariman Point lunch for
stockbrokers. He had an elegant haircut and sophisticated Urdu and a very direct stare…In passing, he mentioned that his company followed strict Islamic rules, that none of his boys smoked or drank” (ibid).

The accounts, replete with detailed descriptions about the much feared yet immensely intriguing underworld that forms a part of the public fascination, supply what Seltzer terms as the “morbid curiosity mongering”(30). Since the novel is based on these real life encounters, the appeal of the novel thus lies in the ‘authentic’ investigation of the writer who, through firsthand experience, lays the unknown and dangerous quarters of the underworld exposed for public consumption. Chandra’s novel can thus be read in the light of Foucault’s theorization on the rise of popular crime fiction in the nineteenth century, whereby he argues that the literary trend of exposing the criminal’s life coincided with the gradual abolition of corporal punishment from the penal system. As public execution and the spectacle of torture of the criminals became less common, the “penal leniency” became a “technique of power” and the criminal became an “object of knowledge” (24), who needs to be discussed, understood and regulated as a social category, instead of being condemned. As Foucault points out: “The carceral texture of society assures both the real capture of the body and its perpetual observation; it is…the apparatus of punishment that conforms most completely to the new economy of power and the instrument for the formation of knowledge that this very economy needs” (304). Consequently, Foucault locates that the birth of crime literature converges with this moment of social change, whereby the literature itself becomes a crucial part of the discourse of criminality (22). Though Foucault makes a crucial distinction between
journalistic literature of crime in the broadsheets, pamphlets and almanacs and the
literary representation of glorified crime in the fictions of de Quincey and Baudelaire, the
emergence of all forms of crime literature testify the growing anxiety about crime and its
unpredictable, threatening forms (68).

Seltzer’s comment on Sim’s works fits for Chandra’s novel as well, that it
“sensationalize(s) the mysteries beneath the humdrum surface and posit lurid secrets to be
detected; they incite and cultivate a fascination with the underworld that converts it into a
bizarre species of entertainment” (30). In a similar way, Sacred Games reports the world
of organized crime almost with an anthropologist’s precision, revealing startling facts
about the various methods and rituals of underworld dealings in a way that is both
informative and interesting. The novel diligently narrates how goods are smuggled across
the borders in spite of patrol forces through elaborate methods: first being brought to the
coastal villages in a “hundred foot dhow,” then put in “neat little fishing boats” for how
transport to the beach, where trucks wait “with plastic sheets on the flatbread” for the
cargo (253). The novel continues to give details about how the smuggled goods are
encashed and circulated as legitimate goods within the market, how crime syndicates
enroll and maintain their gang of boys and how gang wars involve strategic planning, a
network of informers and the involvement of certain allied police officers. Thus, in
another revealing passage, the novel narrates how the significant members of a gang are
traded off by police officers in exchange of lump sum money from the enemy gangs.
Gaitonde commissions Inspector Samant for twenty five lakh rupees to capture his enemy
gang leader Vilas Ranade. In return, Samant quite efficiently traps him in a false
encounter and even the newspapers fail to sense the foul play behind this incident, whereby they report Ranade’s death as a simple case of police encounter—“Shooter Vilas Ranade killed in Encounter, some of the afternoon papers reported the next day”(124). In a way, thus, Chandra’s novel brings to the readers what even the journalists fail to do, that is uncovering the real secrets beneath the apparent veneer of things. There are numerous such narrative moments in the story which reveal the dark, deep secrets of the underworld dealings that are otherwise left hidden from the public eye.

In its expository role, Chandra’s novel also exposes a Mumbai that is both mysterious and dangerous, spurring the anxiety that crime lurks beneath the veneer of an orderly city. In a revealing passage, Chandra narrates the dark underside of the urban space, describing how the criminal underworld also inhabits in an alternative urban space of crime within the geography of the city. As Ganesh Gaitonde proclaims:

I took the land between N.C.Road and the hill which overlooks it…The government owned it, and so nobody owned it. I took it. You know how it’s done…You pay off three chutiyas in the municipality, oil them up properly and then you kill the local dada who thinks he deserves a percentage on your action, like it’s his bhenchod birthright. That’s it. Then the land is yours. I took it so it was mine. (102)

This chilling account of land acquisition and the subsequent description of Gaitonde building up his sprawl of illegal settlements remind us of the anxiety surrounding the ‘illegal’ squatters in megacities like Delhi and Mumbai, which have long been the target of government evictions and civic reforms. Homes to mostly the urban poor and low-
income workers, the illegal settlements have often been identified as encroachments and hence eligible for eviction. The anti-encroachment rhetoric is not only loaded with an argument for the misuse of the land,—as Ramanathan has argued that the term “encroacher” signifies one who “usurps the right to possession and use of land that belongs elsewhere”(45)—the rhetoric also invokes an inherent fear of the elite, productive citizens of the city for criminals residing in those encroached quarters, within the borders of the urban space. Chandra’s novel not only plays with these common anxieties that wreak the modern day urban existence, it also reaffirms with great details, the popularly believed, and often stereotyped, nexus between the underworld and the political parties, police, film industry, and religious groups. Chandra’s novel thus appeals to the fears and anxieties of the urban middle class, and consequently generates interest about the criminal underworld which, as a threatening unknown domain, must be revealed before the readers.

Significantly enough, the accounts of the deadly crimes, and the dark world of the gangsters in the novel, seem all the more threatening because of their otherwise ‘normal’ life. They celebrate Diwali with pomp and enthusiasm, start families through arranged marriages with ‘common’ women and even become disciples of religious gurus and follow spiritual discipline. The seeming normalcy of the gang members and their virtually indistinguishable appearance from the rest of the commoners render them as more dangerous figures in the popular imagination, for they embody the perils that exist among the crowds of common people in the city. Moreover, the uncertainty of their threat is heightened by the very amorphousness of their spatial presence. Thus, unlike Tejpal’s
city, the fictional space of Chandra’s Mumbai does not project specific zones for containing specific population, whereby the criminals and the commoners, the police and the politicians, the call girl and the cinema stars inhabit a fictional geography of Mumbai that is both fluid and precarious. A case is therefore made for surveillance, whereby the crowd needs to be observed closely and the novel itself pans its gaze on the criminals, exposing the secrets of their inner lives as if they are being spied on through surveillance cameras. The intent is to map the unknown and mysterious underworld to render it a more transparent and a known world. The panopticon theorists read the rise of the nineteenth crime novel as a part of this discourse of surveillance—as a mode of disciplinary power, operating through its role as a panopticon of surveilling and disseminating knowledge about the criminal.\textsuperscript{54} Scholars Shang-jen Li argue how the novels like \textit{The Count of Monte Cristo} and \textit{Les Miserables} as distinct manifestations of the nineteenth century anxiety about crime—heightened by the “legal elevation of the bourgeoisie concept of private property…working class uprisings, social disturbances and the Paris Commune” (195)—that cumulated into fears of the “criminal race” living among the crowd of common people (195). With the anxiety about crime on the rise, the criminal becomes an object of both fear and curiosity, and consequently a subject of literary narratives.

\textsuperscript{54} Christopher Pittard also points out the distinct connection of the growth of crime literature with the socio-economic anxieties of the age, arguing that the changing nature of society—particularly through Industrial revolution and rapid urbanization—created new chaos and consequent fears of disorderly behavior. Added to this, as Pittard points out, was the emerging value on “portable property than land” and the threat of the theft of property.
The policing power of a novel form, as D.A Miller argues, plays out in the very practice of novelistic representation, to the extent that the genre of the realist novel itself embodies a panopticon, or what Miller equates to Foucault’s notion of the “micro-politics of the novelistic convention” (21). For Miller, the panoptical power is embedded in the omniscient narration, the “infallible supervision” (23) that penetrates through the surface of things and acquires complete knowledge of the world it places under supervision. As Miller asserts: “We are always situated inside the narrator’s viewpoint…what matters is that the faceless gaze becomes an ideal of the power of regulation (24). Characters and events in the novel thus exist and interact with each other under a surveilling gaze that records and reports the scenes faithfully. Chandra’s novel too is dominated by an omniscient third person narrative voice which pans on Sartaj as he polices and disciplines the city:

Sartaj shrugged. The Gaitonde they had read about in police reports and in the newspapers dallied with bejeweled starlets, bankrolled politicians and bought them and sold them…The early morning man with the tip-off had hung up abruptly and Sartaj had jumped out of bed and called the station while putting on his pants, and the police party had coming roaring to Kailashpada in a hasty caravan bristling with rifles. (29)

Significantly enough, as Miller observes, the realist narration is separate from the “casualties operating in the narrative” (25). It is a gaze that only surveils and knows all, but does not intervene in the events. However, Miller contends that the apparent invisibility of the narrative voice, or the Flaubertian notion of the artist as the invisible
“Dieu dans l’univers” (or like a God in the universe), does often control the discursive framework of the novel through what Bakhtin terms as “monologism”, which Miller sums up as “the working of an implied master-voice whose accents have already unified the world in a single interpretative center” (25). For Miller, the monologic voice never “simply soliloquizes” (25). Rather it asserts its power through the famous nineteenth century technique of style indirect libre whereby the omniscient narrative voice appropriates, comments on and re-articulates a character’s inner thoughts while securing its authority. Chandra’s novel shows an extensive use of the style indirect libre to explore the complex world of crime through Sartaj’s ruminations in passages like these:

The dead boy had wanted more than marriage for his sisters, he had wanted a television set and a gas range…no doubt he had dreamed of a brand new car…What he had dreamed was not impossible, there were men like Gaitonde…And there were boys and girls who had come from dusty villages and looked down at you from the hoardings, beautiful and unreal. It could happen. It did happen, and that’s why people keep trying. It did happen…Katekar nodded and Sartaj knew that Katekar understood…(215)

Why had he (Sartaj) been angry at her? It wasn’t just the money. He was quite used to taking money, to being bought…There was still a lingering aftertaste of indignation in Sartaj’s mouth, a sour rancor that had nothing to do with what a

55 Flaubert wrote to Colet that “the artist in his work should be like God in the universe, present everywhere and visible nowhere”.
spoilt, irritating little child it was. Was it only that she had been unfaithful, that she had done something a woman was not supposed to do? (399)

Sartaj breaks into such self-reflective ruminations often in the course of the narrative, not only projecting an incessant commentary on the multiple facets of the world of crime in Mumbai, but also a glimpse into the privacy of his inner life as mediated by the omniscient gaze. However, a more interesting politics of narratorial authority can be seen in the first person narrative voice of Ganesh Gaitonde which reveals the inner life of the mafia lord and the inner workings of the underworld to the full.

In contrast to the third person omniscient narrator that narrates the inner lives of all the other important characters in the novel—Sartaj, Sartaj’s mother Pravjot, Anjali Mathur and Katekar—Ganesh Gaitonde tells his own story in the first person narrative voice. Though apparently projecting a “dialogism” through an alternative narrative viewpoint, Gaitonde’s autobiography hardly adds “polyphony” to the narrative and is severely robbed of its subversive potential.56 Rather, Gaitonde’s first person narrative seems like a surrogate, rather than a rival, of the omniscient third person narrator constructing an authoritative version of the ‘truth.’ There are several ways how Chandra manages to retain the panopticon power of the narrative while creating an illusion of

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56 I use the terms polyphony and dialogism in the sense of Bakhtin’s theorization. In *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Bakhtin developed the concepts which were to inform much of his work. The concept of ‘polyphony’ (borrowed from music) is central to this analysis. Polyphony literally means multiple voices. Bakhtin reads Dostoevsky’s work as containing many different voices, unmerged into a single perspective, and not subordinated to the voice of the author. Each of these voices has its own perspective, its own validity, and its own narrative weight within the novel.
polyphony. Firstly, Gaitonde’s narrative is split into two points of the novel’s historical time. The first time we encounter Gaitonde speaking out is at an early juncture of the novel’s linear narrative, when Sartaj confronts him in his nuclear shelter. Gaitonde interjects into the omniscient narrative of the novel not only through a first person narrative in direct voice by carrying on a dialogic exchange with Sartaj, but also subverts the panoptic gaze of the narrator through his invisibility. Locking himself up in his impenetrable bunker, he avoids being the object of gaze and rather implements a counter-gaze by looking at others through his surveillance camera. He communicates with Sartaj as an invisible, all seeing voice but offers no glimpse of himself, not even to the omniscient narrator. Consequently, for this short period of time Gaitonde controls the course of events in the novel, and in extension becomes an authoritative narrative voice. The first person narrative in this section is still revelatory of Gaitonde’s early life, but equally teasing and challenging. He refuses to divulge information to Sartaj’s questions like “This building is very impressive. Who designed it for you?” and instead asks counter questions like —“Never mind who designed it Sardarji. The question is how are you going to get in?” (30). He also teases Sartaj: “Gaitonde laughed bitterly. ‘Are your feelings hurt, saab? Should I be more respectful?’”(31). He also challenges and dismisses the omniscience of the narrator. Thus when a power cut shuts off Gaitonde’s voice in the microphone, the third person narration (through Sartaj’s inner thoughts) regains control and in a lengthy passage describes how “it was a matter of waiting, and an hour or two under the hot June sun would turn the unventilated, unpowered building into a furnace that even Gaitonde…would find hard to bear” (30).This information is promptly
dismissed by Gaitonde’s alternative source of power and his counter-narrative: “‘What, you thought it would be so easy?...Just a power cut? What, you think I’m a fool?’”

(30). The narrative voice of Gaitonde at this juncture disrupts and subverts the monologic narrative. This moment of subversion however quickly ends with Gaitonde’s suicide and the consequent silencing of his voice. What follows in the rest of the novel is a continuation of Gaitonde’s voice in the first person narrative, but lacking the subversive potential of the first one. The rest of the novel projects a somewhat posthumous autobiography of Gaitonde which is not situated in the present timeframe of the main linear narrative, unlike the first one. The third person linear narrative continues uninterrupted through Sartaj’s point of view and brings a culmination to the main plot of the story through a single interpretative voice.

Gaitonde’s first person narrative that follows after his death in the novel, in the meanwhile, is interspersed as an distractive appendix to the main plot, which has no presence in the main plot, nor is placed in a meaningful temporal relationship with the monologic narrative. Gaitonde’s voice still speaks to Sartaj but only as a rhetorical gesture and not as a dialogue in the real space and time. And unlike the previous voice, this does not challenge nor subvert the authoritative tone of the omniscient narrator, nor does it hold back information according to its own discretion. Rather it complies with the panoptical role of the omniscient narration by providing a complimentary and an equally expository gaze on the inner workings of the underworld. Not only is the audience for Gaitonde’s narrative been misplaced, whereby the imploration “So Sardarji, are you listening still?...Are you somewhere in the world with me?”(49) becomes a mere
rhetorical question with no real dialogic import, the narratorial space of Gaitonde’s first person persona is also usurped by a posthumous pseudo-autobiographical voice that constructs Gaitonde’s subjectivity in his absence, in the same way the first person criminal narratives of the nineteenth century constructed criminal subjectivities in the *Newgate Report* through biographies of the criminals. Declared dead as a character, distanced from the main narrative and rendered powerless to hold back his secrets, Gaitonde’s narrative becomes a mere foil to the surveiling gaze that uncovers the dark secrets of the Mumbai underworld. Thus, Gaitonde ceases to a performing presence and becomes the Foucauldian object of knowledge.

Apart from the narrative voice, the policing power of the panoptical novel lies most strongly in its ability to convert criminality into a discourse, whereby the figure of the criminal is dissected and studied, and often turned into a site of disciplining. One of the most effective mechanisms of discourse, as Foucault has cogently argued in the *History of Sexuality*, is the mode of confession. From the absolution practices of the Middle Ages, the confession has been a compelling mode through which speakers would acknowledge their deepest secrets and share intimate details about their life. Started as a religious practice, the confession has become an important mode of gathering knowledge and has played a fundamental role in ‘governmentality’ not only the realm of sex and morality but also in “justice, medicine, education, family relationships, and love relations.” (Foucault, 59) and concerning other contexts of life. In the realm of criminal offense, the confession embodies itself as what Foucault (1975) calls as the “gallows speech” where the condemned man would confess his guilt in his final moments—“it
seems that he was given another opportunity to speak, not to proclaim his innocence, but
to acknowledge his crime and the justice of his conviction” (65). Gaitonde’s posthumous
narrative, in which he reveals his own life and candidly talks about his various crimes,
serves the same purpose of a confession. As Gaitonde shoots himself, trapped in his
nuclear shelter all alone and surrounded by police, his death comes as a sort of symbolic
penalty, though self-inflicted, for his deeds. Gaitonde symbolically executes himself and
goes on to confess his multiple crimes that not only testify his guilt but also lays bare his
life and the underworld with its sordid details and darkest secrets. Consequently, the
confession necessarily signifies a power equation between the confessor and the hearer as
Foucault points out: “The agency of domination does not reside in the one who speaks
(for it is he who is constrained), but in the one who listens and says nothing; not in the
one who knows and answers, but in the one who questions and is not supposed to know”
(Foucault, 62). With these “confessed truths”, social controls are effectively implemented
as “confidential statements” slowly surface. Reading from a Foucauldian paradigm of
“penitentiary panopticon” that he discusses in Discipline and Punish, Gaitonde’s self-
inspired confessional narrative thus implies the ultimate conversion of the criminal
subject to an epistemological category.

Foucault’s notion of the “penitentiary panopticon” differs from Bentham’s
panopticon in a way that the penitentiary panopticon is also a system of disciplining
through accumulating knowledge: “it has to extract unceasingly from the inmate a body
of knowledge that will make it possible to transform the penal measure into a penitentiary
operation, which will make of the penalty required by the offence a modification of the
inmate that will be of use to society” (251). Like his earlier works, Foucault’s emphasis here is on the profound relationship between power and knowledge and thereby the inmate becomes useful to the controlling authorities and to the society at large by becoming an object of knowledge. Thus Foucault asserts, “the offender becomes an individual to know” (251). Consequently, as the criminal is co-opted as a discursive subject, he is converted to what Foucault terms as the ‘"delinquent” (251). For Foucault, the ‘delinquent’ can be distinguished from the criminal “by the fact that it is not so much his act but his life that is relevant in characterizing him. The penitentiary operation, if it is to be a genuine re-education, must become the sum total existence of the delinquent, thus making the prison a sort of artificial and coercive theatre in which his life will be examined from top to bottom” (252). In a similar manner, the novel successfully converts Gaitonde from a deadly, unknown criminal to a knowable ‘delinquent,’ whereby he becomes the object of gaze and his life exposed to his the readers to the full.

A significant aspect of converting the criminal to a delinquent involves “biographical information” (252). As Foucault points out, the biographical information of the delinquent should go back not only to the “circumstances but also to the causes of his crime, they must be sought in the story of his life” (252). The introduction of the ‘biographical’ is thus important as part of the penitentiary process because “it establishes the criminal existing before the crime and even outside it” (252). The biographical discourse of the delinquent thus identifies not only the “dangerous individual” but also contributes significant knowledge to the potential of criminality in certain groups of the society. Consequently, modes of social control can be applied to monitor and control the
‘potential criminal’ from the target group even before the crime is committed.

Significantly enough, like the criminals in Tejpal’s story, Gaitonde’s biographical information also conflates criminality with marginal existence, socially disagreeable family history and a history of juvenile violence very early in the criminals’ lives. Gaitonde too was born in poverty; his father committed murder and his mother took up prostitution, and Gaitonde too shows streaks of violence very early in his life when he hurls large rocks at his bullies or carries a knife under his shirt. Subsequently, running away to Mumbai and unable to find a job there, Gaitonde predictably gets pulled into the criminal world/ Gaitonde’s criminality thus conforms to the same socio-economic groups that are ‘ideally’ excluded from the boundaries of the neoliberal urban space. Gaitonde’s life story adds to the already prevalent discourse about the potential undesirability of the poor, the prostitutes, the anti-socials, the refugees, the immigrants and the jobless in the modern neoliberal city—all of whom are identified as possibly disruptive and potentially criminal. The novel therefore, through its multiple narrative techniques equaling the panopticon, projects a close surveillance of the criminal subject and the unknown vagaries of the potentially dangerous underbelly of the city.

The rhetoric of surveillance in the crime novel is also embodied in its importance to small details. As D.A. Miller points out that in a crime fiction “the trifling detail is suddenly invested with immense significance…For in the same process where the detail is charged with meaning, it is invested with a power already capitalizing on that meaning” (28). For Miller, a crime fiction puts an immense emphasis on the revelation of the minute details by the detective or the guardian of law, thus depicting the power of
appropriating trivial details. Consequently, it projects a method of a more meticulous surveillance where, as Miller asserts “what had seemed natural and commonplace comes all at once under a malicious inspection, and what could be taken for granted now requires an explanation” (29). In terms of his narrative style, Chandra is assiduous in etching out the minutiae of the scenes to vivid details, whereby both his main characters—Sartaj and Gaitonde—have great eye for details. Gaitonde’s description of Paritosh Shah’s hub is replete with visual shots of photographic precision:

Paritosh Shah was a family man. I waited for him on a second-floor hallway, near a staircase that exhaled occasional blasts of sharp urine-stink. The building was six stories tall and ancient, with a bamboo framework roped and nailed to its tottering façade, and worrisome gaps in the ornate scrollwork on the balconies. The second floor was full of male Shahs, who passed by where Kanta Bai’s boy had left me on the landing, and they called each other Chachu and Mamu and Bhai, and ignored me entirely. They walked by my dirty shirt and ragged trousers with the barest of glances. They were a flashy, gold-ringed lot who wore mostly white safari suits. I could see their white shoes and white chappals lined up in untidy rows near the uniformed guard at the door. Sometimes inside was the sanctum of Paritosh Shah, guarded by a hoary old muchchad perched on a stool with an absurdly long-barelled shotgun. He wore a blue uniform with yellow braid, and his moustache was enormous and curved at the ends. (57)

The description not only echoes the description of Chandra’s real life expeditions to the haunts of the gang lords, the elaborate depiction of the scene is undeniably voyeuristic,
bringing home to the readers the graphic details of the world of the gangsters. While the physical description of the space sounds almost like a careful mapping of the place for the purpose of recording precise information, the description also gives an inside view into the unperturbed world of the busy gangsters who are unaware that they are being watched, and hence are caught completely off guard, signifying the power of the gazing eye.

The view through Sartaj’s gaze is equally voyeuristic, recording the fine details with equal precision as he describes his world of the police and their dealings with the criminals. Apart from these, the significance of details also forms an important thematic feature in the novel, especially in terms of detecting the secrets of the miscreant. Sartaj confesses the importance of paying attention to details as a part of his profession—“a policeman must gaze steadfastly at everything, anything, what the world is truly made of, you must know it all unflinchingly” (87). It is with this concentrated gaze that Sartaj unmasks many of his criminals and uncovers the ‘truth’ behind the misleading appearance of things. Thus, Sartaj is the first one to find Jojo’s secret chamber behind her neatly arranged shoe rack; he detects the real culprit behind the Kamala Pandey blackmailing case by merely observing a child’s apparently meaningless playful gestures and is the first one to identify the mastermind religious mafia—Guruji—by carefully observing the details of his wheelchair. Like the late Victorian detective fiction of Sherlock Holmes, *Sacred Games* thus celebrates the power of the gaze and in multiple other occasions, the scrutinizing observation of minute details that leads to bigger revelations. As D.A. Miller argues, the novelistic panopticon is thus emphasized through
the notion that “what had seemed natural and commonplace comes all at once under a malicious inspection” (29).

However, Chandra’s novel creates the effect of gaze not only in its visual details but also in its auditory ones, especially by carefully recording the linguistic eccentricities of the underworld. Chandra’s novel is an extensive study in the “tapori” language—a type of Mumbai street language, popularly associated with the underbelly that uses a syncretistic mix of various other linguistic registers like Marathi, Konkani, Gujarati and Tamil, drawing from the wide variety of immigrant populations in Mumbai. Chandra weaves the novel with an extensive use of the Rushdiesque ‘chutnified’ English almost to the point of exhaustion—the novel is replete with words of typical ‘Mumbaispeak’ like “bhai”, “chaavi”, “bole toh”, “lodu”, “thoko” etc—which incites a comment from Pankaj Mishra about “a research-heavy attempt at authenticity” of the novel. Such linguistic features are not new in Chandra’s case, since he has always been a stickler for incorporating the vernacular elements in his novels, while caustically lashing out at literary critics like Meenakshi Mukherjee who read chutnified English as the anxiety of Indianness (“The Cult of Authenticity”).57 However, not going into the debate of the use

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57 Chandra narrates Meenakshi Mukherjee’s critique of his works and lashes back in defense in “The Cult of Authenticity”: “To put a cow, any cow, even one cow, into an Indian story is, I suppose, to "signal one’s Indianness in the context of the Western market. Without doubt, one koel in an Indian narrative causes all sorts of connotations. This despite the fact that every day in Maharashtra substantial koels sit on substantial tamarind trees in their thousands, as they have been doing for thousands of years. And certainly, to title a story with a resonating abstraction like "Dharma" or "Shakti" is to use language that a ‘regional writer’ would be ‘embarrassed’...I imagined the scrupulous and ascetic Munshi Prem Chand blushing with shame under Dr. Mukherjee’s strict gaze, and I shuddered.”
of localisms in Indian English novels and its politics in the literary market, let me focus on how the linguistic eccentricities of the novel work as part of the panopticon. The chutnified English is more than often expository moments in the narrative, revealing the covert linguistic code that circulate among members of the underworld. Gaitonde’s narrative voice is thus spectacularly revelatory:

They learned the language, and then the walk, and they pretended to be something, and then they became it. And so for American dollars, we said choklete, not Dalda like the rest of our world; for British pounds, lalten, not peetal; for heroin and brown sugar, gulal, not atta; for police, Iftekar, not nau-number; a job gone wrong was ghanta, not fachchad; and a girl so impossibly ripe and round and tight that it hurt to look at her was not a chabbis, but a churi. (118)

As the gang members incessantly talk in their cryptic language—precisely to subvert the signification of these words and construct an alternative semiotic code of the underworld, Gaitonde’s narrative decodes the codified language for the readers and renders it legible. The desire for this legibility is most prominently seen in the separate glossary that Chandra provides at the end of the book and on his website, explaining in painstaking details the idiosyncrasies of the language and slangs of the criminal subculture. The functionality of this can be explained through Simon Joyce’s interpretation of the use of the criminal slang in Dicken’s novels, which Joyce reads as a “larger project of making criminal subcultures” available to the reading public. Talking especially of the linguistic glossaries, like Grose’s Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue, Joyce asserts that “working through the processes of infiltration, illumination and categorization, such a strategy
could present itself as providing valuable service for the urban bourgeoisie, who might consider themselves forewarned by the knowledge they gain about the London criminal life” (78). In the same way, Chandra’s attempt at uncovering the underworld slang can be seen as an attempt to render the criminal underbelly more transparent. Like the visual and narrative panopticon in the novel, the language of the novel constitutes a linguistic panopticon that carefully records and elucidates the codified interaction between the criminal subjects, as if keeping them all under the watchful eye.

Though the authenticity of any gangster language remains a subject of debate—as Allon White points out in a study on the underworld slang that “the language or anti-language of a criminal subcultures could never be clearly identified or defined from outside…part of its function was precisely its resistance to any comprehension by the high language” (52)—the frequent use of “tapori” speech in popular media, like television and mainstream Bollywood films, denotes the appropriation of the gangster culture not only as an object of discourse but also as a product for popular consumption for entertainment, which can be termed in Seltzer’s words “the purchasable spectacle of criminality” (33). The intent is to create an effect of taking the reader ‘behind the scene’ and present the criminal world in terms of easy consumable paradigms. As the underworld becomes commoditized for entertainment and an object for close scrutiny in the various cultural products meant to be consumed by the mainstream Indian society, the trend does conform to Seltzer’s notion of the “spy mania” that emphasizes the relation between seeing and power in the literature of the urban underworld. Sacred Games thus
depicts how the criminal outcasts of the neoliberal city are thus not only surveilled upon; they also become objects of entertainment for consumption by the mainstream society.

*The Story of My Assassins* and *Sacred Games* project revealing portraits of the neoliberal urban space. As the Indian megacities like Delhi and Mumbai are revamped and restructured to match the other modernized global cities of the world, the urban space encounters the same tensions of the neoliberalization of the Western cities at the end of the twentieth century. The novels’ urban geography not only project how the urban poor are increasingly dispossessed and quarantined from the core spaces of the city, the fictional world of these two novels also illuminate on the crucial ways how the marginal groups as potential criminals are made objects of discourse, governmentality, social control and subtle bio-politics.
“The people of the Apokalis”: Globalization, Environment and the Marginal

“For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity.”

— Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 9

As Fanon points out in *The Wretched of the Earth*, the question of land and environment has always been a central issue in a colonial and postcolonial context. Thus, along with the themes of social mobility of the marginal and the criminal urban underbellies, a theme that has gained prominence in contemporary Indian novels in the context of globalization is that of the environment. Though the paradigm of the environment was also invoked in the earlier postcolonial novels of Raja Rao (*Kanthapura*), RK Narayan (*Malgudi Days*) and Kamala Markandhya (*Nectar in the Sieve*), those novels invoked the natural world mostly as a mere backdrop to the stories and as a slate where the human drama unfolded and which reflected the inner conflicts of the characters. The recent Indian novels like Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*, Ruchir Joshi’s *Jet Engine Laugh*, Indra Sinha’s *Animal’s People*, Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* however engage with the natural world in terms of deeper ecological issues and concerns about the way the recent forces of globalization affect and metamorphose nature and the people
associated with it. The paradigm of environment in contemporary Indian fiction thus goes beyond the representation of a symbolic landscape in the story, and rather constitutes the material reality of a changing India. Significantly enough, this material reality of the environment is often one of desolation and one that points to a trajectory of exploitative forces related to colonial capitalism to neocolonial global capitalism. As Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee points out, “the peripheral zones of global-capitalist developments” or the “global South” like South Asia, South America and Africa (21) embody a condition of postcoloniality that is “felt and lived as a toxic environmental condition”, whereby a substantial intensification of the experience of the contemporary marginality is embodied “primarily as a traumatic material and bodily encounter with a hostile environment” (24). For Mukherjee, the uneven encounter with the environment is what marks the difference between “the lives of global majority” and that of “the global minority” (24).

Consequently, while the crisis of a marginal existence in the contemporary age of globalization can be defined most succinctly through the crisis of the environment, the most enthusiastic resistances against the victimization of the marginal in a post-globalized age also center on the ecological concerns, through grass root movements that primarily focus on the environmental cause. The trope of the environment thus becomes a significant discursive space where globalization is both experience and resisted.

This chapter explores this widely debated issue regarding globalization—its effects on the environment. Through Indra Sinha’s novel Animal’s People I analyze how the marginal communities become the worst victims of globalization in the often disastrous onslaught of multinational corporations on the environment and its subsequent
degradation as a toxic menace. Yet, on the other hand, through a reading of Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*, I also argue that the marginals are equally, and ironically, victimized in movements of global protectionism and environmentalism as well. Thus, like the processes of environmental decimation, the processes of global environmentalism also hinges on an exclusion of the local inhabitants, whose demands and voices are often silenced in the drive to save the earth. Consequently, this chapter also explores how the erasure of the marginal sections in environmental decision-making in the context of globalization opens up narratives of resistance and spaces of transnational activism for “globalization from below.”

**Corporations and the Environment in Animal’s People**

Published in 2009 that commemorated 25 years of the Bhopal Gas tragedy, Indra Sinha’s *Animal’s People* recalls the world’s worst industrial disaster that took place in the Indian city of Bhopal. On a December night in 1984, the *Union Carbide India Limited* (UCIL) pesticide plant in Bhopal leaked around 27 tons of poisonous Methyl isocyanate gas.

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Borrowed from Richard Falk’s term “globalization from above”, the term “globalization from below” refers to the grass root movements connecting people transnationally on a global scale, but resisting the other, commonly known connotation of globalization—that is economic globalization. As Brecher, Childs, and Cutler define the concept: “Globalization-from-below, in contrast to globalization-from-above, aims to restore to communities the power to nurture their environments; to enhance the access of ordinary people to the resources they need; to democratize local, national, and transnational political institutions; and to impose pacification on conflicting power centers. During the 1980s, according to Falk, transnational activism by the environmental, human rights, and women’s movement became prominent for the first time in history” (xiv).
instantly killing and injuring thousands of people with fatal health consequences. Since then, the disaster has claimed about 15000 lives, injured around 6 lakhs, and continues to wreak havoc in the subsequent generations of victims. Simultaneously, since UCIL was part of the US based multinational company Union Carbide Corporation (UCC), the tragedy also exemplifies the worst case of corporate irresponsibility, state ineptitude and minimal retribution for the affected, making it one of the longest running protest movements in India against the government and the corporation. As the common people, as well as various international activists, continue to fight for their rights for a safer environment, a better compensation and the penalization of those responsible, the Bhopal Gas tragedy raises important questions about the responsibility of the multinational corporations operating in the Global South and their impact on the local environment. Indra Sinha’s *Animal’s People* narrates the story of the ordinary people forever scarred by a fictional industrial disaster, which closely replicates the Bhopal Gas Tragedy. Abandoned by the multinational company from where the disastrous gas had leaked and neglected by the government, the affected people living on the fringes battle against poverty, sickness, death and a bleak denial of basic human rights.

Set in the fictional town of Khaufpur, *Animal’s People* showcases the aftermath of a fictional industrial disaster that closely resembles the Bhopal Gas Tragedy in the magnitude of its damage, and the way the victims continue to struggle for survival. Lashing out at both the “faceless” multinational corporation that refuses to appear for trial, and the corrupt government that is least concerned about its citizens, *Animal’s People* is a caustic critique of the insidious nexus between the state and the transnational
corporation under economic globalization. As Kamila Shamsie asserts in her review of *Animal’s People* in *The Guardian*, “Sinha has a sharp political purpose in telling the story of Bhopal's victims and drawing attention to the fact that it is a story which should, in a world of any conscience, remain within the realm of fiction” (“Behind the Clouds”). Simultaneously, the novel also celebrates the anti-globalization grass root movements by the people that promise to bring in a better future of social justice. *Animal’s People* is thus not only a moving tale of exploitation by the global corporation but also an inspiring account of people’s protest and the grass root movements of collective resistance.

The context of the novel closely mirrors modern day Bhopal after more than two decades of the gas tragedy. Deemed as the worst industrial disaster of human history, Bhopal gas tragedy still haunts the local inhabitants of Bhopal through its long term effects. At the midnight on December 3, 1984, water leaked into one of the storage tanks of the UCIL plant, releasing large amounts of the poisonous methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas and other toxins from the gas plant. As the deadly gas drifted over crowded localities, this leakage affected around half million people. According to the official data, the immediate death toll was 2,259. However, the government of Madhya Pradesh confirmed a total of 3,787 deaths due to gas leakage (“Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation”), however other government and non-government agencies estimated more than 15,000 deaths (Eckerman; Broughton). Thousands of children died after the

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59 See Eckerman, Ingrid. *The Bhopal Saga—Causes and Consequences of the World's Largest Industrial Disaster*
61 See http://www.mp.gov.in/bgtrrdmp/facts.htm
accident or were permanently disabled. Around 70 per cent of the children born before the disaster continue to suffer from respiratory diseases and 55 per cent from affected eyesight (Eckerman; Sharma and Sharma). After the accident, many pregnant women suffered miscarriages, while others delivered malformed babies. More than half the children exposed to the gas in their mothers’ wombs died (Misra; Doyle). Many others were born with deformities and permanent disabilities. Even after 25 years after the gas leak, 390 tons of toxic chemicals abandoned at the UCIL plant continue to leak and pollute the groundwater in the region and affect thousands of people (Kulling; Saini).

Indra Sinha has taken up the cause of Bhopal for more than a decade now, since 1993. The former advertising copywriter-turned-writer got drawn into the Bhopal matters, as Stephen Moss reports, when he received a request for an advertisement to help raise money for starting a free clinic in Bhopal (“Triumph from disaster”). The ad campaign resulted in generous contributions from newspaper readers for the clinic and inspired Sinha to a long term commitment with the issues of Bhopal. He has been consistent in his active campaigning and writing (mostly in The Guardian) for the cause of Bhopal, which culminated in his second novel Animal’s People that was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 2007 and won the Commonwealth Writers Prize (Eurasia Region, Best Book) in 2008. The narrative is set against the backdrop of a fictional city called Khaufpur closely re-creates the post-disaster Bhopal still fighting for justice. Like Bhopal, Khaufpur too had witnessed a fatal gas leak from a pesticide plant, which the people of Khaufpur call the “Kampani” (Company), which had killed thousands and the gases still continue to affect the survivors. The story is told through the
eyes of the central character Animal, a nineteen year old orphan boy who has been
crippled by the poisonous gas and walks on all his four limbs. Like the survivors of
Bhopal, the victims of Khaufpur too had been fighting the abusive power networks—
from the global corporation, the state, the judiciary, the media—that led to and still
continues to spell doom for the victimized common man. Thus, in order to understand the
tragedy of Khaufpur, one needs to understand the issues of Bhopal, for the connections
between the two are too deeply entangled.

However, in his email interview with Sandhya of Sepia Mutiny, Sinha proclaims
that the one thing the novel was not supposed to be was being a ‘polemic’. Consequently,
instead of being just a manifesto for the cause of Bhopal, the novel effectively weaves in
crucial issues in its narrative of a humane story of fictional victims surviving in a post-
disaster scenario. The characters are uniquely appealing, and like the central character
Animal—who is foul mouthed, cynical, crafty and yet lovable—often elude being
stereotypical objects of sympathy. As reviewer Ligaya Mishan of New York Times points
out, “Sinha is an effervescent writer, but he endows his characters with quirks rather than
fully realized interior lives”. Simultaneously, though victims of a gas disaster that closely
resembles the Bhopal tragedy, the characters are not necessarily tied to the geographical
space of Bhopal only. Rather, bereft of any real spatio-temporal specificity, they
represent the generic survivors fighting their lives out against the larger powers of global
capitalism anywhere in the globe. The fluidity of their identity, coupled with the
ambiguity of the geographical locale, makes the novel a universal tale of corporate
exploitation all over the world. As Sinha asserts the wider scope of his novel in his interview with Sandhya from *Sepia Mutiny*:

The disaster that overtook the city of Khaufpur is always kept sketchy, the Kampani is never explicitly named, it is just the Kampani, and as such is not simply Union Carbide or Dow Chemical, but stands for all those ruthless, greedy corporations which are wreaking havoc all over the world. In Jaipur at the literary festival Vickie and I met Alexis Wright, who has written of the aboriginal peoples’ struggle against Rio Tinto Zinc, in Bombay we spent time with Sudeep Chakravarti who has written a powerful book called *Red Sun*, about the Naxali and Maoist movement in India - again tribal peoples forced off their land by mining corporations and steel companies, including Tata, which is trying to get Dow off the Bhopal hook.

Sinha’s novel indeed becomes a voice of resistance, as Sheila Jasanoff points out, “In recent years, a work of fiction, Indra Sinha's novel *Animal's People*, may have done more to revive international interest in Bhopal, and thus to touch the conscience of the world, than decades of medical or legal action” (114). Apart from being a tale of injustice, the novel is also a tale of local resistance. Balanced against the gross exploitation of the poor by global corporations is common people’s unrelenting resistance in the form of grass root activism. Thus, while the fatal toxicity and the dying people in Khaufpur portray the gloom, the resilience of the common people and the potency of their protests bring in new hopes for a successful resistance.
One of the most impassioned critiques against economic globalization has been in terms of the damage the multinational corporations wreck on the natural environment and ecological balance of the global South. From the depletion of the Amazon rainforests to the exploitative oil mining in Nigeria, global corporations have been held responsible for multiple instances of ecological damage driven by corporate greed.\(^{62}\) Michael Anderson makes a comprehensive list of some of the most infamous cases of environmental devastation caused by the corporatization of the developing countries under economic globalization. His list goes as follows: The Bhopal gas tragedy that was caused in 1984 by a leak of methyl isocyanate gas from a pesticide plant owned by Union Carbide in Bhopal, India; the injury and sterility caused in Costa Rican banana plantations from exposure Dow-manufactured chemicals; the radioactive pollution in the village of Bukit Merah in Malaysia caused by Mitsubishi; the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest in Ecuador caused by Texaco; the damages following the collapse of a dam from copper mining in Papua New Guinea; the environmental pollution caused by Shell’s oil exploration in Nigeria; asbestosis and mesothelioma in South Africa caused by asbestos exposure from Cape Industries and so on (405-406). In most cases, the issue is not only about the corporate exploitation of the resources of the developing countries, but also about the refusal of the multinational corporations to take social and environmental

responsibility. Thus, though factories are set up and run with the motive of profit maximization, the corporations, as several scholars point out, refuse to take responsibilities for their overseas workers or the foreign environmental damage (Jacobs; Korten; Eckersley; Sethi). Nagaraj and Raman caustically point out the duplicity of the corporations’ Western, wealthier home countries like the US, which applies a differential rule of corporate liability at a national level and a different one for abroad. As they assert: “It is significant that while no attempt was made by the US government to get their multinationals to improve safety standards abroad, many steps were taken within the US to enhance safety and protect potential victims of industrial hazards” (537). Industrial disasters and ecological damage by the corporations in the global South thus often result in an evasion of corporate responsibility, and a lengthy battle for human rights and compensation like in the case of Bhopal gas tragedy. Predictably, the worst victims of the environmental hazards caused by global corporatization are the marginal communities—the local indigenous populations who thrive on the local natural resources, the local laborers who encounter poor environmental conditions in their work place and the poor who cannot afford to escape from the disasters. These marginal communities are often forgotten when policies are drawn and decisions are made by the state in favor of the MNCs. Critiquing such policy decisions, Vandana Shiva calls globalization a process of stark “environmental apartheid” (“A Common Future” 3), which operates through “restructuring the control over resources in such a way that the natural resources of the poor are systematically taken over by the rich and the pollution of the rich is
systematically dumped over the poor” (136). Sinha’s novel depicts such victimization of the poor residents of Bhopal who suffer due to corporate onslaught on the environment.

As a geographical locale, Khaufpur (which literally means the city of terror) is a place of death and sickness. Animal, along with thousand others in Khaufpur have lost their families, and their health been irreparably damaged for life from a night of toxic gas leak that equals the magnitude of the Bhopal tragedy. Animal has been orphaned and his spine incurably twisted that makes him walk on all fours. Almost all the residents of Khaufpur have been affected by the gas disaster in some way or the other. Thousands died and left innumerable families affected. Victims like Pyare Bai lost her husband, Pandit Somraj lost his family and his voice, Huriya Bi lost her daughter and is left with a maimed granddaughter. The disaster has not even spared the unborn, like the aborted fetus that Animal names as Khā-in-the-jar, which bears testimony to the intensity of the damage done by the gas. Living in a city teeming with tales of tragedy, Animal narrates several other stories of victimhood with precision, yet with a cynical indifference that comes with witnessing a long trajectory of suffering on a mass scale. Khaufpur remains poisoned for decades after the accident and the plight of its people continues as the abandoned factory and its residual toxins continue to contaminate the ecology of the town. Thus, discovering that her breast milk shows signs of poisoning even after decades of the disaster, a woman from Khaufpur laments: “Our wells are full of poison. It’s in the soil, water, in our blood, it’s in our milk. Everything here is poisoned” (108). Sinha’s Khaufpur replicates the bleak picture of modern Bhopal, where toxic chemicals still lay exposed, contaminating groundwater sources and continuing its impact on the survivors
(Chander; Stringer; Labunska) while the next generations are still being born with birth defects arising from gas poisoning (Eckerman). Khaufpur is thus the metaphorical dystopic space of environmental devastation, ushered in by the globalized corporations as a living nightmare for the common people.

As the novel reveals issues of continuing environmental damage, it embodies a distinct rhetoric of environmentalism. Evoking a prominent metaphor in environmentalist discourse, the landscape of Khaufpur is portrayed as an ‘ecological dystopia’, a term that Lyman Sargent defines as depicting the horrors of a man made environmental collapse (31). Taking up the rhetoric of environmentalism, the novel recurrently invokes the image of ‘Apocalypse’—which Lawrence Buell has asserted as “the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal” (285). Animal refers to the night of the gas leak as the “night of the Apokalis” and refers to himself and the people of Khaufpur as the “people of the Apokalis” (136,148), the ones who have witnessed the worst of an environmental destruction. As Animal’s foster mother Ma Fanci says: “Don’t you know that the Apokalis has begun? It started here and it’s coming back again” (143). Again, using another popular rhetoric of environmentalism, the novel describes the mass deaths of the people closely incarnating the visions of an annihilating man-made environmental disaster that many environmentalists like Rachel Carson, Paul Ehrlich and Murray Bookchin had predicted. Animal recalls scenes of the innumerable deaths on the fateful night that testify the magnitude of the disaster: “On that night it was a river of people, some in their underwears, others in nothing at all, they were staggering like it was the end of some big
race, falling down not getting up again…the road was covered with dead bodies (32). The post-apocalyptic landscape, as Animal describes through his description of the factory site, is a topography of toxicity and lifelessness, and resembles the visions of the dystopic environment that Carson describes in *Silent Spring*: “There was a strange stillness…It was a spring without voices…only silence lay over the fields and woods and marsh (2). Similarly, the factory site at Khaufpur too is devoid of all life forms: “Listen how quiet it’s. No bird song. No hoppers in the grass. No bee hum. Insects can’t survive here” (29). Sinha’s Khaufpur aligns with Carson’s dystopia also in terms of the causal factor in the catastrophe, for Carson too describes a world ruined primarily by the poisonous chemical pesticides. Simultaneously, the description of factory site also echoes another frequent image that Buell observes in late twentieth century environmental writings—“the vision of a tampered-with nature recoiling against humankind in a kind of return of the repressed” (308). As wilderness grows back in the poisoned land, the factory site thus embodies the conflict of man versus nature, with nature trying to reclaim its possession:

Mother Nature’s trying to take back the land. Wild sandalwood trees have arrived, who knows how…That herb scent, it’s ajwain, you catch it drifting in gusts, at such moments the forest is beautiful, you forget it’s poisoned and haunted…Creepers, brown and thick as my wrist, have climbed all the way to the top…like they want to rip down everything the Kampani made” (31).

Animal’s impassioned description of the abandoned factory site clearly demarcates the central dialectical tropes in the novel, of the corporation versus nature. On the one hand is the greedy, exploitative corporation, embodied by the “Kampani”, which wreaks
catastrophe on the environment with acts of recklessness; and on the other hand is nature, rendered devastated and which in return, turns lethal for mankind. Animal, in his description of a devastated Khaufpur, stands aligned to nature in their common victimhood, and consequently, demonstrates a greater ecological awareness of the disaster.

Not only does Animal visualize the apocalypse and can perceive the wilderness of the place with a greater empathy with nature, Animal’s description also repeatedly evokes the sense of the ‘uncanny’ that Timothy Morton identifies as an integral part of ecological awareness. As Morton asserts: “The more ecological awareness we have, the more we experience the uncanny…If there is an inevitable experiential dimension of ecology, there is an inevitable psychological dimension. This psychological dimension includes weird phenomena that warp our psychic space” (54). This concept of the uncanny, which Morton originally derives from Freud’s conception of the uncanny and describes as the weird perception of both familiarity and strangeness in desolate nature (53), is also seen in Animal’s perception of the post-disaster environment. Abandoned by all, the factory is Animal’s exclusive shelter, for none except Animal comes near the dreaded haven of poison. Animal is thus familiar with every corner of the desolate locale and uses it as his private sleeping nest. Yet, in spite of its familiarity, the place also embodies a sense of uncanny for Animal, which he sometimes feels in the overpowering strangeness of the place. As he comments:

Eyes, there’s such a thing as bhayaanak rasa, the kind of terror that makes your little hairs stand up and tremble…I feel it when I come to this high place…You
should hear the ghosts, the factory is full of them, when a big wind blows, their souls fly shrieking up and down the empty pipes. Some nights, there’d be nothing here, just the ghosts and me… (32)

As the place invades the psychological space of Animal, he also shares a sense of unity with the post-catastrophe landscape, both rendered disfigured by the external agents of environmental exploitation. Sinha’s narrative thus marks the distinction between the victimizer and the victimized, asserting that the global corporation is a larger debilitating force that destroys both men and nature alike.

In contrast to the environment and its people stands the corporation, the ‘Kampani’, which Sinha indicts as the sole perpetrator of the disaster. The tragedy calls into question the issue of ethical responsibility of the multinational corporations operating in the third world nations. The UCC, on which Sinha’s ‘Kampani’ is primarily modeled, has been identified as a major cause behind the Bhopal disaster. Several studies have revealed that the UCC did not maintain that crucial safety measures in the plant that potentially lead to the disaster. The negligence on the part of the UCC ranged from the absence of safety parts in the plant like the MIC tank alarms, sufficient manual backup systems, slip-blind plates to the malfunctioning of several other safety features like the vent gas scrubber and the refrigeration system much before the actual tragedy struck. (Eckerman; Chouhan). Apart from that, the poor work conditions including bad employee management, halted promotions, forced compromise on safety controls and the communication gap between the mother company and the Indian branch (Kurtzman; Cassels) had also been blamed for the long term causes of the disaster. These failures on
the part of the UCC blatantly pointed out the down side of multinational expansion in the name of foreign investment, and the slovenly attitude of the corporation when it comes to the context of a developing nation. On a similar strain, The Trade Environmental Database (TED) Case Studies of the Mandala Project from American University, have pointed to “serious communication problems and management gaps between Union Carbide and its Indian operation”, characterized by “the parent companies [sic] hands-off approach to its overseas operation” and “cross-cultural barriers” (233). However, the company’s failings not only display corporate indifference and sloppiness but rather testify, as David Weir argues in the various chapters in his book *The Bhopal Syndrome*, larger issues of corporate exploitation that makes use of third world conditions like malnutrition, illiteracy, poverty, and a short life expectancy to conductively increase the international mobility of hazardous products, industry, and wastes to these lucrative markets of cheap labor, low maintenance costs, and relative indifference to occupational health. The UCC, however, shifted all blames on its Indian counterpart UCIL, claiming that most of the shares of the company were owned by the “Indian financial institutions and thousands of private investors in India” (“UCC-Bhopal”). Evading all responsibilities for the catastrophe, the UCC also claimed that “neither Union Carbide nor its officials are subject to the jurisdiction of the Indian court since they did not have any involvement in the operation of the plant” (ibid). The CEO Warren Anderson fled Bhopal on the night of the tragedy, never to return again to face any of the charges filed against him.

Sinha’s novel cogently brings out such evasive nature of the multinational corporation that is far beyond the reach of the common people, both geographically and
metaphorically. Set in more than a decade after the tragedy, the novel shows the people of Khaufpur still fighting for their rights against the company. The people of Khaufpur demand that the ‘Kampani’ take responsibility for the disaster, pay proper compensation to those affected and clean up the rest of the poisoned site that continues to pollute the surrounding environment. Yet, as Animal points out, the “trouble was that the Kampani bosses were far away in Amrika (America), and they refused to come to Khaufpur’s court and no one could make them” (33-34). As the protestors in Khaufpur keep on proclaiming their demands with no success, Animal informs how the almost impossible probability of the company being brought to justice has entered the idiom of Khaufpur’s speech as a metaphor for eternity (34). Sinha’s novel shows the glaring power discrepancy that lies between the transnational global corporation and the locally bound hapless victims who have virtually no power over the international expanse of the corporation. The aftermath of the gas tragedy bears witness to the dangers of transnational fluidity brought in by globalization; for while the free market has opened up the third world nations for corporations and a free flow of goods and capital, it is this very fluidity that allows the corporations to abandon their accountability of the local population.

However, it is not only the negligence and the lack of accountability of the corporation that is laid bare in the tragedy; Sinha’s novel exposes other crucial issues that refer to how companies, like the UCC, actively perpetrare violent measures against the local population in order to protect its interests. More than anything else, the immediate concern of the “Kampani” after the disaster struck was to cover it up. Animal
sarcastically comments on the Kampani’s refusal to divulge the composition of the poisonous gas as a part of its “trade secret” (230), which actually refers to the UCC’s refusal to release any information about the MIC, both before and after the disaster. Eckerman shockingly asserts that, “in reply to the telegrams sent to UCC’s US headquarters, doctors in Bhopal were told that the gas was harmless” (90); several other researchers like P.S. Chauhan and et al, Jamie Cassels, and Tara Jones question the UCC’s callous actions of hiding crucial information about the poisonous gas, or what Suroopa Mukherjee terms as the “conspiracy of silence” (35).

The novel also refers to multiple other instances related to the Bhopal tragedy that testify the corporation’s deliberate attempt to mislead people and cover up the disaster. One such event that Sinha re-creates in the novel is that of the use of sodium thiosulfate, which was a major point of contention in the Bhopal issue. The UCC initially recommended the use of sodium thiosulfate, which seemingly relieved the victims’ symptoms, but later withdrew the statement in an attempt to what has been interpreted as a cover up of evidence of HCN in the gas leak that the UCC had vigorously denied (Dhara; Broughton). Consequently, in alliance with the corporation, the state resorted to official violence, ordering the police to break into the volunteer medical camps, confiscate the thiosulfate and arrest the doctors administering the drug (Jasanoff 188). Animal narrates a similar incident in the context of Khaufpur that replicates the thiosulfate episode in Bhopal:

This thighs-of-fate was a medicine which was helping people to get relief. News quickly spread, from all over the city people came to wait in line for injections,
but suddenly the treatment was stopped. Some bigwig let slip that the Kampani bosses from America had rung up their best friend the Chief Minister and told him to stop the thighs-of-fate…The police came, wrecked the shack, beat up the doctors. Zafar said that by giving thighs-of-fate somehow also proved that the illness could pass to future generations. The Kampani was afraid of this knowledge getting out, so they had the thighs-of-fate stopped and many were lost who could have been saved. (112)

Animal’s narration, though apparently misinformed about the actual name of the medicine, nevertheless testifies the active violence that the global corporation metes out on the population of the poor. Moving beyond the issues of negligence, incidents like these reveal the global corporation as a ruthless profit machine that would go to any length to safeguard its monetary interests. Consequently, this incident also raises crucial questions about the insidious alliance between the transnational corporation and the national government, an issue that I will take up later in the chapter.

Instances of the company’s attempts to cover up the gravity of the catastrophe have been cited numerous other times in the course of the novel’s narrative. When the American doctor, Elli Barber, arrives in Khaufpur to open a clinic, the leader of the protestors, Zafar, vehemently opposes her moves. Zafar doubts her to be to be another of the “Kampani” sponsored medical personnel, many of whom have visited Khaufpur to gather case histories, surveys and data, only to refute the claims of the protestors and claim that the chemicals have ceased to have poisonous effects on people (69). Consequently, the corporation can shove off its responsibility for any further action on
their part. Zafar’s fears are not unfounded for they refer to the real life rhetoric of a current toxin-free Bhopal, propounded by the UCC and backed by the state. For example, denying the negative effects of the gas The New Scientist Nov 28, 1985 issue quotes a letter that the UCC CEO Warren Anderson wrote “We sponsored leading medical authorities, here in the United States to visit Bhopal…We are pleased that their experience in Bhopal and the news reports from there corroborate the beliefs of our own medical people, that those injured by methyl isocyanate are rapidly recovering and display little lasting effects (41). Interestingly enough, none of the research projects on Bhopal—whether be it by international scholars or Indians—seem to assert that the toxins in Bhopal have ceased to affect people, arguing on the contrary for the long lasting damaging health effects that have been carried even to the subsequent generations. In a similar strain, Zafar voices the concern of the real victims who continue to suffer the after-effects of a devastating disaster, while company backed data attempt to establish the apparent ‘safety’ of the poisoned city.

The callous role of the “Kampani” in Khauppur not only stands for the UCC’s violence on Bhopal, but rather symbolizes several other instances of corporate terrorism brought in by neoliberal globalization in multiple sites of especially economically marginalized nations. As Zafar asserts the universality of their plight:

Is Khauppur the only poisoned city? It is not. There are others and each one of has its own Zafar. There’ll be a Zafar in Mexico City and others in Hanoi and Manila and Halabja and there are Zafars of Minamata and Seveso, of Sao Paulo and Toulouse…(296)
Zafar’s examples recall the several other incidents of environmental debilitation by corporatization all over the world—the fatal air pollution by the industrial plants in Mexico City that affected more than one million people in 1999; the severe mercury pollution by the Chisso Corporation in Minamata (which gave rise to the infamous Minamata disease), the industrial disaster at Seveso caused by a chemical plant in 1976, the AZF explosion at a Toulouse chemical factory in 2001 that killed half a million people and several others that carry the same story of the common man’s suffering due to corporate irresponsibility. The novel is an overt critique not only of the UCC or its role in the Bhopal gas tragedy alone, for critique against this particular company extends beyond its specific context to expose the intricate network of power of a generic “Kampani” or global corporation. Thus, Khaufpur, and in a way Bhopal, is not an isolated case of corporate oppression but belongs to the same trajectory of the exploitation of global corporations that spelled multiple instances of disaster and suffering.

The novel projects the hegemony of the global corporations also through metaphorical motifs. In a poignant passage in the book, Zafar describes his vision about a powerful corporation that reigns supreme in economic power all over the world. Though narrated as a surreal sequence, the description brings out a potent critique of the operations of a global corporate house that seeks to control, exploit as well as manipulate people for the sake of its profits. Zafar’s vision sees the company as no less than an aggressive military body of neocolonialism, armed with its own battalions of soldiers and weapons of mass destruction like tanks, jets and atomic bombs (228-229). Again, Sinha takes a dig at the corporate sponsored scientific research projects that ultimately work to
accelerate the profits of the company—“doctors doing research to prove that the Kampani’s many accidents have caused no harm to anyone”, chemists experimenting with poisons and the biologists testing them on the living animals to gauge their effectiveness (229). Sinha’s caustic satire also lays bare the pretense of corporate social responsibility (CSR) which many contemporary corporate houses use to accentuate their social appeal. With more companies claiming an allegiance to environmentalist and social concerns as part of their business ethics, or what McAlister calls as “strategic philanthropy”(689), Sinha’s narrative scathingly rejects those corporate claims for social good as gimmicks in public relations.63 Thus Jafar’s vision clarifies: “It is the job of the PR people to tell the world how good and caring and responsible the Kampani is” (229).

And finally, Zafar’s illuminating epiphany reveals the networks of power that are enmeshed with the global corporation. The “Kampani” is aligned with political power and the media, the underworld and the lawkeepers, on both national and international level. By listing “generals and judges, senators, presidents and prime ministers, oil sheikhs, newspaper owners, movie stars, police chiefs, mafia dons”(229) all on the roll of the corporations’ friends, Sinha hints at the immense span of the power networks spun by the unbridled spread of global capitalism. The corporation in Zafar’s dream thus simulates the structure of a classic global corporation based in a first world nation and controlling its operations globally. As Bartlett and Ghosal describe the classic

63 McAlister defines “strategic philanthropy “as such: “Many firms have discovered the performance benefits of philanthropy, including increased customer loyalty, enhanced company reputation…In order to reap these benefits… philanthropy is increasingly integrated within corporate strategic plan” (690).
Multinational Corporation through the metaphor of an octopus— with a single brain located in the company headquarters operating the strategic resources while its tentacles are spread across the globe (65), Zafar’s dream too seems to reveal the octopus-like structure of corporate power networks that are disseminated across nations.

Crucial in this power network is the alliance between the corporation and the nation state that embodies the characteristic realignment of power in a neo-liberal economy. As Foucault argues, unlike liberalism which sought to restrict the intervention of state for more freedom of market, neoliberalism restructures the state according to the interests of the market— i.e “a state under the supervision of the market rather than a market under the supervision of the state” (116). It is this same proposal for the “effective state” that the World Bank President Wolfensohn endorsed when he summoned the nation states to play “a catalytic, facilitating role, encouraging and complementing the activities of private business and individuals” (“The State in a Changing World”). Consequently, the repressive power of the states, like the police and laws, have been applied to protect the interests of the neoliberal market, with the government increasingly intervening in aspects of citizen’s social lives that are “off limits” for the neoliberal ideology (Sklar 1995; Hutton 1997). In India, as activist Smitu Kothari points out, the state has deployed security forces “to facilitate domestic capital or foreign exchange-bearing entrepreneurs” (114). Subsequently, Kothari points out in another instance how the business interests of foreign investors have often been projected as national interests by the state. As a result, Kothari argues, the democratic space of those victimized by the new economic policy of liberalization shrinks significantly (114). The Bhopal Gas
Tragedy witnessed such an alliance between the state and the corporation, which the novel poignantly brings out in its sharp critique of the state government.

The role of the Indian government, especially of the state government of Madhya Pradesh, has been a subject of rigorous critique in the context of the Bhopal disaster due to several reasons. Firstly, it is questioned why the state government gave permission for the factory to be set up in a densely populated locality unsuitable for a pesticide plant. Several independent investigations—from news agencies like the NDTV to scholars like Brojendra Nath Banerjee have pointed out the utter inanity of the local Municipal Board and the state authorities for having overlooked the safety standards and risks associated with the UCIL factory, suggesting an insidious nexus between the state and the corporation. Secondly, the state and the central government have been directly indicted for aiding the CEO of UCC, Anderson, to flee from India immediately after the disaster. While the question as to how Anderson could escape safely immediately after the disaster logically points to some governmental intervention, in a recent testimony the former Union minister Sathe has asserted the direct involvement of the then Chief Minister Arjun Singh in providing a government plane to safely escort Anderson out of the country. Finally, the Bhopal activists have located the state-corporation nexus mostly in the compensation deal that the Indian state settled with the UCC, on behalf of the victims, which proved to be totally inadequate for the victims’ losses. The $470 million UCC paid to the Indian government, was partly based on the disputed claim that only 3000 people died and 102,000 suffered permanent disabilities (Kumar 366). By the end of October 2003, according to the Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Department,
compensation had been awarded to 554,895 people for injuries received and 15,310 survivors of those killed, with each receiving a meager amount of money.

Sinha’s *Animal’s People* takes up these very issues through the lived experiences of the characters for whom the state—in both its figures of authority and repressive actions—is analogous to the callous company. As one resident of Khaufpur sums it up:

Haven’t the politicians been in the Kampani’s pocket from the beginning? Have you forgotten the old days, how those pompous big shots would ride in the Kampani limos, never looking to right or left…Says Nisha, “The CM does what the Kampani wants.” (112)

While the CM is revealed as a close ally of the corporation, working in its best interest rather than the people, the novel also brings out the repressive state machinery through police brutality on protesting crowds. Twice in the course of the narrative, the crowd gathered to protest is dispersed by the police through violent means. The scenes of the police brutality in the novel are vivid, bringing out the double helplessness of the victimized people, who are ignored by the corporation and repressed by the elected state machinery. Yet, as the people continue with their protests, the powers of the state enter in a shameless private deal with the company representatives to settle the demands of compensation. The novel describes the meeting between the two sides of power as a secret, clandestine affair conducted away from the public eye, and again safely guarded by the repressive machinery of the police and the military. Though the meeting in the novel ends up in a humorous disaster—with someone jeopardizing it with a stink bomb—the instance in the narrative points to the real life deals like these that are constantly
settled between the state authorities and the powers of global capitalism, outside the public eye. With such daunting power networks to challenge, how much do the local protests matter? *Animal’s People* shows that they matter significantly, for the novel narrates a hopeful future where the juggernaut of global capitalism can be stalled by the grass root movements of the poorest marginals.

The issue of socio-economic marginalization of the victims is crucial in understanding the complete power dynamics of the post-disaster politics. Khaufpur’s disaster, like any other environmental disaster, is a tragedy whose worst affected victims are the poor people from the margins. Victimhood in environmental disasters is often disproportionate in terms of the socio-economic standing of the victims and related to poverty (Wisner 654), for the poor are not only inadequately equipped to face a disaster, they are also the most potential victims of an environmental calamity owing to their proximity to the hazardous sites. As Alexander and Fairbridge assert, the poor are constrained to occupy sites that are most vulnerable to hazards—“the flashfloodable canyons of the Andean cities such as Cusco, the steep, unstable tropical hillsides of Caracas, Rio De Janeiro and Ponce, the crumbling and floodable river banks of Ganges and Brahmaputra in Bangladesh…and the sites next to dangerous chemical plants in Mexico City and Bhopal” (663). Consequently, hazards strike these poor populations the most, who, having nowhere else to go, battle for their existence against disasters that the privileged can afford to escape. The Bhopal Gas tragedy was also essentially a tragedy of the poor, for the places most heavily affected in the gas leak were the congested slum colonies such as J. P. Nagar, Kazi Camp, Chola Kenchi, and Railroad Colony that
surrounded the factory site. Residing in dangerous proximity with the toxic pesticide plant, these poor slum people were virtually damned for disastrous consequences even before the night of the gas leak. Yet, the residences were hardly a matter of choice—though the government often dubbed them as forced illegal occupancy—and rather testified the sites of marginal existence that accompanied the processes of modernization brought in by corporations. As De Grazia cogently puts it, the Bhopal slums were direct products of the factory itself:

> Every Indian city that can boast of progress must confess to the slums that come with progress. To create a new factory of the highest levels of design and technology employing one thousand workers in a fully modern setting is to create a shanty-town of 30,000 people. It is practically a sociological law, one which, however, has been given only cursory attention by those who try to built modernity by emplacing isolated scraps of it upon a traditional culture. (16)

Ironically, when modernization turned into disaster, it is again the people at the margins who suffered the most.

The worst victims of the gas leak in *Animal’s People* too are the poorest of the poor. Though the night of the disaster brought death and illness for all the people of Khaufpur, Sinha’s narrative shows how the poor are affected beyond just the physiological or personal damage, for the tragedy left them economically impaired as well. The novel also brings out a disproportion of victimhood between the affluent and the poor—though both the well-off Pandit Somraj and the poverty ridden slum dwellers lost their families on the fateful night, it is the poor people of the slums who experience
the aftermath of the disaster in their daily struggles for existence. Thus, while Somraj as a victim experiences the disaster as more of a personal loss where he lost his family, and even artistic loss—since the gas rendered the vocalist in him mute—his plight is completely different from that of the slum dwellers like Animal or poor women like Pyare Bai, for whom the tragedy compounds when it couples with struggle for the basic means of sustenance. For Pyare Bai, the illness and death of her husband through gas poisoning was not only a personal loss, but also the loss of the sole bread winner of the family and thereafter a deeper plunge for her into poverty and debt. Pyare Bai’s post-disaster trouble is a particularly telling example of how environmental catastrophe strikes its most severe blows on the underprivileged people—in this case a poverty ridden widow with no support. Alarmingly, Animal asserts that her suffering is not one of its kind, for “the story of this one woman contains the tale of thousands” (83). Similarly, for Animal, the disaster renders him not only physically disable but also incapable of fending for himself except as a street scavenger. Thus, for all the victims at the Nutcracker, Khaufpur’s most affected slum, the calamity brought in by the Kampani is essentially a multifaceted force of physical and economic destruction.

Significantly enough, poverty also stalls the prospects of recuperation after the disaster. The suffering of the victims of Khaufpur, like the victims of Bhopal, is all the more aggravated by their lack of resources, inability to afford good health care, poor living conditions and most importantly, their negligence by both the state and the corporation. Zafar narrates how proper healthcare is also at stake for the poor people—since the doctors also spurn the poor, refusing to touch them for the fear of pollution (24).
Similarly, Animal exposes the futility of the so called “free” hospitals that are of no avail, as the poor of Khaufpur still pay exorbitant prices for a bottle of blood (24) or struggle to afford the much needed oxygen for the gas affected victims. Added to that is the subhuman living conditions of the slums that most of these victims are confined to, making it almost impossible for these poor people to recover from the damage done to them. Doomed to a life of waste, the poverty of the victims fetches them more neglect from the authorities, who hardly care about these people living on the margins of the society. With neither the state nor the company ready to take any responsibility for these impoverished victims, ironically the poor man himself gets blamed for the mess that he is in. Thus, when Elli gasps with disgust at the way most slum dwelling victims in Khaufpur live—“filth, litter and plastic all over, open drains stinking right outside the houses. Flies. Every bit of waste ground used as a latrine”—the government doctor lays the blame on the people themselves—“it’s these people, they don’t know any better” (105). Sinha critiques this very discourse of blaming the poor for their sufferings, which is a part of the larger neoliberal discourse of individual self-care. Decrying that each individual is responsible for his own welfare and self-care, neoliberalism asserts that the poor are “responsible for their own fates” (Corbridge and Harris 121) and hence the state has no responsibility for them. In the same way, as Sinha shows in the novel, the actual government indifference for the continuing suffering of the poor victims of Bhopal echoes the idea that nobody else is responsible for the plight of the poor but their own condition. Quoting a real life instance of this rhetoric, Muneeza Naqvi reports that Babulal Gaur, the state minister for gas relief and rehabilitation in Madhya Pradesh,
denied charges that Bhopal is still being polluted by the toxic factory residues; insisting that there is no current toxic contamination to cause the current birth defects ‘allegedly’ related to the disaster. Rather Gaur promptly lays the blame on poverty—asserting that “the diseases plaguing children are only a consequence of living in poor slums”.

Simultaneously, the debilitating effects of poverty are often manipulated into a rhetoric of fatalism of the poor man, who is destined to suffer by some way or the other if not by the company. In the novel, Elli narrates the moving account of her encounter with another doctor regarding the state of affairs in Khaufpur. While Elli expresses shock and indignation at the plight of the poor, raising questions about their justice: “But what about those people? The ones still waiting for justice? The ones who are suffering without help? Do you move on and leave them behind?”; the other doctor on the other hand justifies the fate of the poor as inevitable—“Those poor people never had a chance. If it had not been the factory it would have been cholera, TB exhaustion, hunger. They would have died anyway” (153). Thus, the relative low life expectancy of the third world poor becomes a distorted excuse for discounting the damage done by corporation, and in extension becomes an excuse for the corporation and the state to absolve their liabilities for these marginal victims. The logic is that since the victims are already vulnerable to disease and death from their own living conditions, and the corporation cannot be held responsible for causing too much damage. Sinha’s narration of the rhetoric of fatalism in the doctor’s assertion seems to explain why the authorities have least bothered to take up the cause of the Bhopal victims even after 25 years after the event.
Not only that, the profiling of the victims according to the relative cost of their lives also explains the pattern of disproportionate compensation for the Bhopal victims which is the lowest when compared with other scales of disaster compensation. The average amount to families of the dead was only $2,200 (Kumar 24) which is nothing compared to the immense damage the victims faced. If compensations are based on the cost of the damage caused, then the poor people’s lives were assigned a minimal value. As Castelman points out, had compensation in Bhopal been paid at the same rate at which the asbestosis victims were being awarded in US courts by defendants including UCC, the liability would have been greater than $10 billion dollars (218). Hanna, Morehouse, and Sarangi also provide another instance of discrimination for the Bhopal victims—six months after the Bhopal tragedy on June 23rd, when an Air-India Jumbo crashed off the coast of Ireland, the relatives of all the 300 victims were speedily settled for a compensation of nearly 1 million rupees each (12). The grossly disproportionate compensation is a marker, among many others, how the victims of Bhopal tragedy were discriminated against on account of their marginalized socio-economic status.

Devastated by the disaster and ignored for being on the margins, the underclass victims of the gas leak stand at a huge power differential with the authorities of power. Yet, Animal’s People narrates an impassioned account of common people’s fight against the mighty forces of global capitalism and tells a story of grass root struggles. On an apparent comparison of agency, the victims are of no match to the immensely powerful global corporation and the state. Zafar describes this unequal war for justice where all the power is tipped on the side of the Kampani:
My people are the poorest on the planet, those we fight against are the richest. We have nothing, they have it all. On our side there is hunger, on theirs greed with no purpose but to become greedier. Our people are so poor that thirty-three thousand of them together could not afford one Amrikan lawyer, the Kampani can afford thirty three thousand lawyers” (228).

The poor people of Khaufpur take on the powerful “Kampani” with no other means and weapons other than the power of collective resistance, whereby all the victims join together in protest without any individual difference. The novel thus projects a powerful manifesto for social activism that could challenge the oppression of the power structures and through the success of the fictional people of Khaufpur, paints a hopeful future for Bhopal when justice will finally be achieved. Yet, the collective resistance of common people is not only limited to Khaufpur’s localized protests, involving only the affected victims, but rather the novel portrays a resistance movement on a much larger scale—that draws in people from diverse social classes and even foreign nationalities—to unite together for the cause of the victims. As the upper class Zafar, Nisha and Somraj, as well as the American doctor Elli join in with the underprivileged victims of Khaufpur to fight against the damage meted out by the global corporation, their collective protest exemplifies how anti-corporate activism, even in the context a localized issue, transcends its immediate local and national boundaries to invoke resistance on a transnational scale.

The resistive undertone of the novel is most emphatically captured in the characters of Animal and Zafar. In an in depth analysis of Sinha’s novel, Rob Nixon argues that the figure of Animal projects a resistive paradigm in the model of the
picaresque. Terming Animal as the “environmental picaresque” Nixon argues how Animal exhibits both the discomfiting abject of the elite class and the trans-identity who embodies the leakiness between human and non-human, the national and the foreign. No longer contained within specific categories, Animal is thus a subversive figure who disrupts the apparent normalcy of things and instead spuriously resurfaces everything that the socially remote, privileged classes, with their “ornate rhetoric and social etiquette, seek to contain, repress, and eject” (451). Thus, as Nixon explicates:

Since the Spanish Golden Age, the picaresque has posed questions about the class and gender politics of crime, contrasting the narrator’s pecadillos with the weightier crimes that society’s overlords commit and from which they are structurally exonerated. This passion for interrogating the hypocrisies of criminality—above all, the inequitable definitions of crime—makes the picaresque a promising fit with the priorities of the environmental justice movement. Sinha, in repurposing the picaresque, brings into brilliant focus the environmental, epidemiological, and economic fallout of the terrors that transnational, neoliberal lawlessness dispenses in cahoots with corrupt, legally immune local politicians. (252)

Thus the eccentric, cunning, often amoral Animal often stands out in resistance against the shams of the pseudo-philanthropic institutions—the news and media, the state and global aid—by exposing them and attacking them and refusing to co-operate with them in their utilitarian motives.
Another important figure of resistance is the local activist Zafar who spearheads the people’s movement in Khaufpur. He embodies the Gramscian idea of the “organic” intellectual—a leader of the masses whose role is no longer limited to eloquence, “which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions but in active participating in the practical life as a “constructor, organizer ‘permanent persuader’ and not just a simple orator” (10). Like the Gramscian “organic” intellectual—who is not to be seen as someone confined to an elite group but as someone grounded in everyday life to articulate the prevailing dominant world view of the community he seeks to represent—Zafar also shares his lived experience with the marginal victims he seeks to speak for. Thus, as Animal asserts, he has become an integral part of Khaufpur’s people, having “lived among them, dressed like them, shared their poverty and drank water from the same stinking well” (22). Though initially an outsider who took up the cause of Khaufpur, Zafar thus becomes an essential part of Khaufpur’s community through a long trajectory of shared social experiences in oppression and injustice, in the daily perils of living in a toxic environment and most importantly, in the collective experience of constantly battling the Kampani and fighting for fundamental rights. Significantly enough, like the Gramscian organic intellectual who is also distinguished less by his affiliation to a professional organization and more by his socio-cultural function to articulate the concerns of his group, Zafar is also an activist who left the institution of education and mobilizes his people outside the paradigm of an institutional organization. As essential harbinger of social action, Zafar mobilizes the masses of Khaufpur to organized modes of social activism. Zafar’s leadership successfully culminates group
solidarity among the victims who stand united in their resistance, no matter what the odds. The mass boycotting of Elli’s clinic—when Zafar initially suspected Elli for working in the interest of the Kampani—exemplifies how the common people can unite in collective action in spite of their individual interests. Though Elli’s clinic had presented an overwhelmingly lucrative offer by promising free medicine and quality treatment to the long neglected gas victims, the people—in spite of their failing health and intense physical suffering—remained united in boycotting it for the larger political goal of achieving social justice through solidarity.

The novel narrates several instances of intense individual suffering that the victims determinately bear to keep the boycott going, accentuating the unwavering resolve of the people to forego individual needs for a social consciousness expressed in communal resistance. With the neoliberal ideology increasingly propagating concepts of ‘individuality’ and ‘self-care’ dominating the discourse of a post-globalized world, the common people of Khaufpur in Sinha’s novel project a powerful counter-discourse of collective identity that embodies resistive potential against the powers of global capitalism. The conflict of these two contrasting paradigms of self-care versus communal responsibility is emphasized in Animal’s dilemma to whether exploit Elli’s resources for his personal good or to be loyal to his community. Cynical of the potential results of Zafar’s activist movement, though not his intention, Animal initially takes up a more pragmatic approach to redress his own damage. Consequently, he manipulates his duties as a member of the activist group for his individual interest—preparing the course for his own cure through Elli, when thousands of other victims unite in resolve to boycott her
clinic. Yet, in spite of his intense desire for self-betterment, Animal’s final decision exemplifies the triumph of his collective identity over the individual one. Thus, though he is offered treatment in a US hospital to cure his disability, Animal finally chooses to use the money he had saved for his operation to release another fellow victim, Anjali, from prostitution. When contemplating over his choices, Animal—who had long been concerned with personal well being and ingenious modes of individual survival — is overwhelmed by a feeling of empathy with the other victims who died fighting the aftermath of the disaster. A sense of the collective seeps into Animal and makes him more conscious of his communal ties over his individual needs, thus depicting a strong subversion of the neoliberal ideology.

However, collective identity for these marginal victims is not only a matter of choice but also a necessity. This is the only way the hapless victims, belonging to the margins of society, can make their voices heard and articulate their concerns. As Zafar leads his people through multiple facets of social protests, the marginal victim who is often an invisible entity for the mighty bodies of power, is transformed into a part of a potent community with a powerful force of collective resistance. Thus, it is only when the people of Khaufpur is gathered together as unified community in protest—whether be it in the collective demonstration outside the Chief Minister’s House or in a group hunger strike demanding justice for the victims—that the state authorities takes notice of the people’s demands. Narrating how the Chief Minister and the oppressive machineries of the state were ruffled every time the people poured in collective actions of protest, the novel both celebrates social activism as “weapons of the weak” (James Scott) and hopes
for a better future of social justice brought in by victims on the margins. The people’s resistance in Khaufpur is also a direct reference to the long trajectory of innumerable pockets of protest and powerful activist movements in Bhopal that have been fighting for justice over more than two decades. Sinha expresses his admiration for the relentless struggle of the victims, quoting a report from *Outlook India*:

> The victims haven’t given up. Their struggle for justice and dignity is one of the most valiant anywhere. They have unbelievable energy and hope…the fight has not ended. It won’t, so long as our collective conscience stirs. (“Interview with Mark Thwaite”)

Significantly enough, activism in Bhopal illustrates a successful mobilization of marginal identities for numerous illiterate, poor, marginalized women like Rabiya Bee, Mohini Devi and the more famous Rashida Bee and Champa Devi Shukla—who have now received the Goldman Environmental Prize for their leadership roles towards environmental justice—and moved out of their primary domestic spheres to assemble in political action against the state and the corporation. Thus, almost all the thriving local organizations actively working with the victims of Bhopal — like *Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachari Sangh, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan, Gas Peedit Nirasrit Pension Bhogi Sangharsh Morcha*— are essentially conglomerations of protestors who come from the socio-economically marginalized sections of society. In a similar strain, Eurig Scandrette’s study on Bhopal activism reveal the astonishing phenomenon of how the illiterate, underclass victims of Bhopal—who were completely ignorant about the corporation or even the roles of their elected state representatives—
grew aware of the issues, learned about their rights and could finally mobilize themselves and others in the skills and tactics of political protests. The Bhopal disaster thus witnessed the powerful uprising of common people to social activism, which though non-violent, had immense import in keeping the issues of Bhopal alive.

Sinha’s narrative also brings into context the transnational compass of resistance against the powers of globalization. Anti-corporate protests in the contemporary age, especially in matters of environmental issues and rights, have often witnessed an involvement of activists from all over the world. As economic globalization disseminates through national boundaries to reach multifarious localities, the resistance movement to the exploitative forces of globalization have also dispersed beyond local and national boundaries to networks of protest on a transnational scale, a phenomenon that is commonly known as “globalization from below”. Brecher, Costello and Smith define the term as a resistive counter-movement:

through which people at the grassroots around the world link up to impose their own needs and interests on the process of globalization…people can indeed exercise power over globalization, but only by means of a solidarity that crosses the boundaries of nations, identities and narrow interests. A corporate driven top-down globalization can only be effectively countered by globalization from below” (ix-x).

Consequently, as several grass root activist movements of the Global South—like Abahlali base Mjondolo (South Africa), Narmada Bachao Andolan (India), —engage with localized issues of oppression of the poor, indigenous rights and minority dispossession, they are often joined by activist support from the international protestors, often from the Global North. Similarly, the fight for environmental rights in a post-disaster Bhopal also witnessed a considerable participation from the transnational protest groups hailing from the first world countries. US based major activist networks like Amnesty International and GreenPeace as well as the international campaigns formed solely for Bhopal—like the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal, International Medical Commission on Bhopal—have been fighting for the cause of Bhopal on a transnational scale and garnering support for it internationally. Significant among these transnational efforts is the Sambhavna Trust, funded by the Pesticides Action Network UK (PAN-UK), which is run as a coalition between local, national and international volunteers consisting of eminent doctors, scientists, writers and social workers. Actively fighting for justice in Bhopal, as well as providing direct medical help to numerous affected victims of gas poisoning in Bhopal, the Sambhavna trust sets a commendable example of how transnational engagement with local issues can counter the onslaught of global capitalism and the damage it does to the people on the margins.

Taking its cue from the real life situations, the narrative of Animal’s People too focuses on the context of international activists in local resistance movements. The American doctor, Elli, leaves her own country and settles in Khaufpur, only to provide free medical help—much like the voluntary doctors of Sambhavna clinic in Bhopal—to
the long neglected, poor and suffering victims of Khaufpur. Again, Elli’s decision to help the people of Khaufpur represents a potent resistance on a personal level—for Elli not only works on her own, without tying up with any organization, but also takes up a fight against her own husband, who works for the ‘Kampani’. Elli singlehandedly gives out medical relief to the poor, relentlessly works to improve the living condition of the victims, enthusiastically arranges for Animal’s treatment in a US hospital and in all probabilities, is the woman behind sabotaging the insidious deal between the Kampani lawyers and the state authorities. Sinha thus shows how the earnest efforts of even a single person can make a huge difference in the counter movement against globalization.

Though Elli’s intervention in the matters of Khaufpur was initially received with suspicion that she might be working for the Kampani itself, the misunderstandings about Elli quickly give away to her acceptance in Zafar’s group, and the resistance movement in Khaufpur gains in dimensions. The novel thus celebrates resistance as a collaboration between the local and the transnational forces, for the fluidity of global capitalism can possibly be countered only by an equally diffusive model of rhizomatic resistance in the way Hardt and Negri asserts, “the forces that contest Empire and effectively prefigure an alternative global society are themselves not limited to any geographical regions. The geography of these alternative powers, the new cartography…is being written today through the resistances, struggles and desires of the multitudes” (xvi).

*Animal’s People* thus narrates an blatant tale of corporate exploitation as well as the grass root resistance of the people. While Khaufpur’s plight brings up questions of the unbridled onslaught of global capitalism, the resilience of the people spell a hopeful
future for collective resistance that subverts the rhetoric and policies of neoliberalism. The novel ends with a sense of continuity, for the struggle against the powers of exploitation will go on. Thus Animal proclaims: “All things pass, but the poor remain. We are the people of the Apokalis. Tomorrow there will be more of us”(366). However, while Animal’s People ends with the depiction of a hopeful future brought in by people’s struggle, Amitav Ghosh’s The Hungry Tide projects a more haunting story of marginal victimization, with no possible avenue for their redemption. Ironically, it is not the corporate exploitation of the environment but rather the global initiatives to preserve the natural world of the global south that leads to a harrowing victimization of the marginal, subsistence-based communities. The novel’s environmental crisis can be resolved only when global conservationists like Piya realize the limitations and concerns of the local people, and work for a more context-specific conservation process.

Global Conservation and the Dispossession of the Marginal in Amitav Ghosh’s The Hungry Tide.

Set against the unique backdrop of the Sunderbans, Amitav Ghosh’s The Hungry Tide narrates a compelling account of underclass settlers striving against the tumultuous ecosystem of the deltaic archipelago. Considered to be one of the most significant postcolonial writers of modern day India, Ghosh has repeatedly invoked issues of power dynamics, oppression and marginal identities in the colonial and postcolonial context. Thus, his Glass Palace narrates the Indian immigrant labor experience in Burma, The Circle of Reason pans on the poor weaver Aloo criminalized under colonial laws, and In
*An Antique Land* focuses on reconstructing the marginal history of the 12th century Indian slave Bomma. Moreover, the marginal characters of Deeti and Kalua (*Sea of Poppies*), Luchman and Mangala (*Calcutta Chromosomes*) that appear in Ghosh’s other novels also exemplify his engagement with the marginal identities who are often rendered silent in mainstream narratives of history. *The Hungry Tide* too takes up the issue of marginality but in a unique context of globalization, ecogovernmentality, conservation, and environmental research in the exceptional geology of the Sunderbans. While the landscape of the Sunderbans spells unpredictability—embodying a complex conjunction of the land, water and sea—complemented by a unique ecology that pits the poor settlers in a constant tug of war with the dangerous and feral animals, global environmentalism and ecotourism become a larger menacing force that evicts and displaces the third world poor, dispossessing them consequently from the very natural resources on which they depend for daily subsistence.

Set in a modern India where global conservation organizations, the nation state and cosmopolitan researchers engage in supervising the local environment, *The Hungry Tide* narrates a consequent dispossession and silencing of the marginal entities inhabiting the landscape by the nation state and global forces of conservation. A countermovement to environmental destruction, global environmentalism ironically invokes an equally oppressive process of victimization of the marginal in the context of a developing nation like India, which can hardly afford to join the bandwagon of global conservation due to its immensely high population density and poverty. I read *The Hungry Tide* to explore the politics of such marginalization affected by the dominant global environmental
discourses on Sunderbans, as they unfold as a continuous trajectory of power through the distinct spatio-temporal tropes of the postcolonial nation state to the contemporary era of neoliberal globalization. Simultaneously, I also explore the intricate relationship between environmental conservation and the neoliberal commoditization of the natural world and the way the local inhabitants are adversely affected by these larger developments. Thus, like the processes of environmental decimation, the processes of global environmentalism also hinges on an exclusion of the local inhabitants, whose demands and voices are often silenced in the global drive to save and market the earth.

*The Hungry Tide* tells a gripping story of diverse characters who hail from distinct socio-cultural tropes and intersect each other against the most powerful presence in the novel—the landscape of the Sunderbans. A deltaic archipelago consisting of hundreds of islands located at the confluence of the rivers Ganga, Meghna, Brahmaputra and the Bay of Bengal, the Sunderbans is characterized by powerful and unpredictable workings of natural forces. Coupled with an ever changing topography, the Sunderbans—as it possibly derives its name from the *sundari* or mangrove trees—also features the largest wilderness of natural saltine mangrove forests that make parts of the region almost impenetrably dense with foliage. Such a unique natural environment also facilitates a rich variety of rare and often ferocious wildlife, including poisonous snakes, dangerous crocodiles and most significantly, the man eating Royal Bengal Tiger. At once mysterious and deadly, exotic and vengeful, the Sunderbans personifies a complex ecotope with diverse connotations. Navigating this fascinating ‘tide country’ is the central protagonist Piyali Roy, a young American cetologist of Bengali origin, who travels to the
Sunderbans to study the rare, endangered river dolphin, *Orcaella brevirostris*. On her onward train journey she meets the Delhi-based professional translator Kanai Dutt, who is on his way to meet his aunt, Nilima, who has long settled in the island of Lusibari. Piya and Kanai separate from each other after their initial journey and the story continues as a staccato narration between two main plots—alternately panning on Piya’s research expedition with Fokir, the young and illiterate fisherman with an immense knowledge about the river, and Kanai’s literary expedition of Sunderban’s history through the diary left behind by his deceased uncle Nirmal. While the central narrative of the novel depicts the environmental issues and the marginalization of poor, local fishermen like Fokir in the landscape in the context of contemporary India, a parallel narrative on the massacre at Morichjhapi—retrieved through Nirmal’s diary accounts—portrays a violent history of conflicts between the local inhabitants of the Sunderbans and the Indian nation state in alliance with global drive for conservation.

The incident of Morichjhapi is crucial to Ghosh’s novel that projects the violence of the post-independence nation state as it tries to blindly emulate the concept of nature from the global north. Divya Anand reads this incident as the central theme of the novel that shows how one dimensional environmental conservation policies, “disregarding the material reality of a landscape, are detrimental to the socially and economically backward classes like the indigenous peoples, forest dwellers, tribals and nomads” (157). Ghosh’s novel traces the historical details of the 1973 massacre to considerable accuracy. The landless partition-refugees, consisting of people mostly from Dalits and other subaltern castes, had settled down in Morichjhapi which was one of the islands under the purview
of a wildlife conservation project--Project Tiger. When they refused to give up their land against the government’s call for illegal settlement, the settlers met with a violent process of eviction by the armed state forces that killed, raped and drove out hundreds of people under the pretext of clearing the land for environmental conservation. The Morichjhapi incident points to the issue of eviction of the local communities for securing land for environmental conservation that has been particularly telling in the context of tiger conservation in India. The killing at Morichjhapi not only shows the pitfalls of blindly applying Western conservation models in developing countries, but also reveals the excruciating violence with which such a model is imposed.

Ironically, unlike Animal’s People, the incident of Morichjhapi in The Hungry Tide portrays environmental conservation, rather than environmental exploitation as the main victimizing force for the marginal groups. Thus, like corporate exploitation of the environment, the counter-discourse of global environmental conservation is equally exclusionary of the marginal groups. Though predominantly a 1960s movement, concepts of environmental conservation had already taken shape in the later colonial period to ‘preserve’ the needs of the empire. Thus while forests were reserved to appropriate the natural resources exclusively for the colonial regime, the preservation of the wild animals— as John MacKenzie observes— ensured that “access to animals was to be progressively restricted to the elite” as games for their hunting or used as “tourist resources” in national parks (215). 65 A major motivation behind colonial conservation

65 Thus the colonial eagerness for conservation of Indian forests, as Guha and Gadgil asserts, and the first attempt to safeguard forests and impose state control
was however connected with the conceptualization of the colonized tropical islands as the mythical space of Eden. The colonialist encounter with the vast ‘wild landscapes’ in India, Americas and Africa, along with their luxuriant stove of wild flora and fauna came to symbolize the long cherished European dream of a paradisiacal wilderness untouched by humans (Grove; Prest). Thus, the colonial mission of conserving the wilderness in its pristine form, which was a projection of a romantic and essentially Eurocentric view of the natural world as an antidote to modernization, had started to take concrete shape in the colonial period through botanical gardens, protected forests and wildlife and national parks—which include the still thriving tourist hotspots of Yellowstone, Yosemite and Serengeti. Significantly, the later environmental movements that emerged in the industrialized Western nations in the 1950 and 60s—spear headed by mostly US and European organizations like the Sierra Club and the World Wildlife Fund and individual environmentalists like Rachel Carson, Paul Ulrich, Aldo Leopold—raised alarm against environmental crisis and emphasized on protecting the purity of nature on the same precepts of colonial wilderness conservation. The driving idea behind saving the world was largely built on this grand plan of preserving biodiversity through the conservation of the wilderness, not only in the Western nations where environmentalism took its roots but also through a conservation of forests all over the globe.

The transnationalization of environmental conservation thus defines an important aspect of the process of globalization. Working under the assumption that the poor, ‘third
world’ nations are not only capable of protecting their own natural resources but are also responsible for destroying the environment and its biodiversity, the North based global environmental organizations and conservationist NGOs—which Ramachandra Guha deridingly terms as the “green missionaries”—donned paternalistic roles in protecting the ‘third world’ environment and thereby dictated strategies for wilderness preservation to countries that are economically and politically weak ("Radical American Environmentalism). The North’s hegemony in both personnel and policies was blatantly evident in most global initiatives regarding biodiversity preservation, as Vandana Shiva aptly puts it:

While the crisis in biodiversity is focused as an exclusively tropical and third world phenomenon, the thinking and the planning of biodiversity conservation is projected as a monopoly of institutes and agencies based in and controlled by the industrial North. (Biodiversity 7)

Consequently, the nations of the global South were often pressurized to comply with the global environmentalist rhetoric for wilderness preservation through various ways—which ranged from political pressure through United Nations initiatives and various global conventions like the Stockholm Conference (1972) and the Rio Convention on Biological Diversity (1992); to hefty grants from global organizations like the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), NAFTA or the World Bank financed Global Environmental Fund (GEF). The Eurocentric concept of conservation, often emulated in postcolonial nations like India, essentially precludes an elitist control over nature and a
marginalization of the indigenous marginals from their rights over the land. As Ramachandra Guha critiques the myopic strategies of northern conservation:

This belief (or prejudice) has informed the many projects, spread across the globe, to constitute nature parks by evicting the original human inhabitants of these areas, with scant regard for their past or future. All this is done in the name of the global heritage of biological diversity. Throughout Asia and Africa, the management of parks has sharply posited the interests of poor villagers who have traditionally lived in them against those of wilderness lovers and urban pleasure seekers who wish to keep parks “free of human interference”—free, that is, of humans other than themselves…At present, the majority of wildlife conservationists, domestic or foreign, seem to believe that species and habitat protection can succeed only through a punitive guns-and-guards approach. (“The Paradox” 17)

Consequently, the creation of the reserve forests and wildlife sanctuaries were essentially accompanied by the eviction of multitudes of poor forest-dwellers and marginal villagers—who Mark Dowie aptly terms as the “conservation refugees” and estimates their numbers to anything between one hundred thousand and six hundred thousand (120)

_The Hungry Tide_ focuses on such western domination through the tenets of environmental conservation through India’s official initiative for tiger protection through Project Tiger—one of such large scale conservation schemes based on the model of Western conservation ideals. Project Tiger was conceived in collaboration with the WWF International and other foreign conservation NGOs, which as Dowie asserts, “has
persistently embraced a model of western practice that focuses on individual endangered species—‘mega-charismatic metavertibrates’—like elephants, rhinos or tigers, rather than on whole habitats or eco-systems”. Consequently, the initiation of Project Tiger not only implied a symbolic drive for national pride through the figure of the tiger, it also garnered political advantage for the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, who—as Mahesh Rangarajan asserts—encashed the wildlife conservation issues to “cultivate a small but influential lobby in the Western world” (198). Yet, this much vaunted project embodies an elitist reconfiguration of the native landscape according to the tenets of the Northern wilderness ideal, whereby the marginal presence and interpretation of landscape is often obliterated through a violent process. Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* projects such a process of environmental hegemony through two crucial issues that often form of the crux of many environmental debates. Firstly, the Morichjhapi incident narrated at length in the novel brings up the crucial question of marginal displacement that inevitably accompanies the northern conceptualization of preserving nature. And secondly, Ghosh’s narrative also shows how the prevalent concepts of northern environmentalism affect a dialectics of anthropocentrism versus biocentrism whereby animals and humans are essentially pitted in conflicting categories.

In one of his interviews, Ghosh condemns the very rigidity of the state in implementing the conservation model at the cost of the poor, which seems to work under the assumption, as Volkmann, Grimm, and Detmers point out, that they are “wicked people with some perverse criminal instinct” while in reality they are “some of the poorest people of the world”, braving the forests for nothing more than some honey (82).
Consequently, in his novel, Ghosh describes the oppressive measures of the state police in evicting the settlers of the island Morichjhapi, whereby police boats cordoned off the islands for days together, used tear gas and rubber bullets on unarmed people, forcibly prevented food or water to reach the islands and destroyed their possessions. The inhumane treatment reached immense magnitude, as the novel describes in graphic details how the siege went on for many days to the effect that despite judicious rationing, “food had run out and the settles had been reduced to eating grass. The police had destroyed the tube wells and there was no portable water left; the settlers were drinking from puddles and ponds and an epidemic of cholera had broken out” (215). While the eviction of the settlers in Morichjhapi can be seen as a part of the long trajectory of denying land rights to the partition refugees—who were seen as illegal immigrants and unwanted burden on the Indian nation state—the brutality meted out to clear the land in Morichjhapi was certainly driven by the justification of implementing the international protocol of wildlife conservation. Significantly, Kusum voices the utter disregard of these protocols for human lives in the poorer countries and the violence of the globalization of environmentalism:

This island has to be saved for its trees, it has to be saved for its animals, it is a part of a reserve forest, it belongs to a project to save tigers, which is paid for by people from all around the world. Every day, sitting here with hunger gnawing our bellies we would listen to these words over and over again. Who are these people, I wondered, who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them? Do they know what is being done in their name? Where do they live, these
people? Do they have children, do they have mothers, fathers? As I thought these things, it seemed to me that the whole world had become a place for animals, and our fault, our crime, was that we were just human beings…(217).

Kusum’s ardent cry sums up the crux of the debates surrounding the international drive for ecological conservation as it attempts to take into its purview the more populated and poorer global south. Along with this, Kusum’s indictment also raises crucial questions about the conceptualization of nature in terms of the binaries of humans versus animals.

The dichotomy between an anthropocentric and a biocentric world that forms the basis of Northern environmental thoughts, especially that of ‘deep ecology’, is a much debated concept when taken in the context of poorer Southern nations. The basic premise of this binary essentially conceives environment as a dialectic space where humans and animals are pitted in mutually exclusive categories. Simultaneously, such a world view—taking its cue from Western philosophy--- presupposes that a human is by nature egotistical and he interacts with nature with pride and arrogance. Consequently, radical environmental ethics like “deep ecology” argue for a more humble place for man in the natural world by focusing on the preservation of the non-human, biocentric world and claiming rights for other life forms that seem to be marginalized by the prominence of the human. Such a worldview, though apparently noble, has often been termed as fallacious.

As one of the most vocal critiques of this binary, Ramachandra Guha cogently dismisses this paradigm for addressing environmental issues in a misleading way, arguing that the two most pressing factors for global ecological destruction are overconsumption by the wealthy nations and militarization—none of which has any tangible connection with the
biocentric-anthropocentric divide. Contending that the “root of global ecological problems lie in the disproportionate share of resources consumed by the industrialized countries as a whole and the urban elite within the third world,” (80) Guha further asserts that the anthropo/biocentric dichotomy, when imposed on the global south, triggers an adverse effect of marginalization:

If the above dichotomy is irrelevant, the emphasis on wilderness is positively harmful when applied to the Third World. If in the U.S. the preservationist / utilitarian division is seen as mirroring the conflict between “people” and “interests,” in countries such as India the situation is very nearly the reverse. Because India is a long settled and densely populated country in which agrarian populations have a finely balanced relationship with nature, the setting aside of wilderness areas has resulted in a direct transfer of resources from the poor to the rich. ( “Radical American Environmentalism” 80)

Thus, for Guha and other third world environmentalists like Vandana Shiva, the argument for setting aside a part of the land exclusively for the animal world is not only the “luxury of the rich” (Earth Democracy 49) but also acts as a red herring to distract us from the real environmental issues and moreover allows for a complete disregard towards the plight of the subalterns who are already marginalized not only their economic status but also by a hostile predatory landscape inhabited by the fiercest of the animals—the Royal Bengal Tiger.

Considered to be one of the fiercest group of man-eating predators, the tigers of the Sunderbans have often baffled biologists for their unparalleled aggressiveness
towards humans, killing off hundreds of people each year. The human death toll is also compounded by the fact that the residents of the Sunderbans consist of some of the poorest population of the state—people who risk their lives to venture out into the jungles to gather meager amounts of honey and firewood for survival and often fall prey to the man eating tigers. Not only those, the tigers are often reported to have crossed into human settlements and buffer zones to attack humans and their live stocks. In spite of several measures being taken by the state to stop the aggression of the tigers, several unarmed villagers are killed constantly. The menace of the tigers has always loomed over the islanders of Sunderbans for decades together. In a context like this, it is fallacious to conceptualize the humans merely as the arrogant ecological dictators and the tigers as helpless victims left at the mercy of the settlers. Though I find Annu Jalais’ interpretation of tigers as insidious, “egotistical” beings conscious of their protective rights a little too far-fetched, the fact remains that applying the deep ecological model of biocentrism would amount to a gross misreading and injustice to the poor islanders of the Sunderbans. Kanai voices these very concerns of global conservational drives that are often oblivious of the local realities:

It was people like you,” said Kanai, “who made a push to protect the wildlife here, without regard for the human costs. And I’m complicit because people like me—Indians of my class, that is—have chosen to hide these costs, basically in order to curry favor with their Western patrons. It’s not hard to ignore the people who’re dying—after all, they are the poorest of the poor. But just ask yourself whether this would be allowed to happen anywhere else. There are more tigers
living in America, in captivity, than there are in all of India—what do you think would happen if they started killing human beings? (248-49)

Kanai thus emphatically exposes the shams of wildlife protection that comes at the cost of ignoring human lives, precisely so because the victims in question are socio-economically marginalized and hence are valued less by society. Kanai’s comment brings to the fore the very elitist nature of such an environmental ethics that is propounded by both the first world nations and the richer classes of the global South.

Ghosh in his novel asserts the same dynamics of elitism that Ramachandra Guha identifies in the context of wildlife reserves in India in which he argues that the movement for conservation in the developing countries is primarily fuelled by the five elite groups: 1) the urban dwellers and foreign tourists who want the wilderness as a getaway for recreation 2) the ruling elites who see conservation of certain species, like the tiger as a mark of national prestige 3) the international organizations like WWF who work with a mission of paternalist protectionism for the third world, 4) the functionaries of the state forest services mandated by law to control the parks and 5) biologists who rally for conservation for the sake of science (How Much Should 14). As these elite groups dominate the landscape of the Sunderbans through their version of environmentalism, the marginal settlers are further pushed to the margins of survival.

66 The recent Forest Rights Act passed on 18 December, 2006 attempts to redress the “historical injustice” meted out to the forest dwelling communities and grants them rights to land and other resources that were denied to them over decades as a result of the continuance of colonial forest laws India. Though the law comes as a landmark verdict that seems to revise the colonial and Eurocentric notions of conservation, several tribal activist groups are protesting against the loopholes of the law and its bureaucratic difficulties.
While faithfully recreating Sunderban’s violent history of past eviction, Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* also masterfully depicts the various dynamics surrounding the landscape in the contemporary context and the continuing marginalization of the islanders by the elites within the nation, transnational tourists and the neoliberal ecotourism market. As a biosphere reserve of considerable national and international importance, the contemporary Sunderbans is portrayed in *The Hungry Tide* as a landscape dominated primarily by three distinct yet privileged groups—i) the state officials controlling the land as a reserve forest ii) the international scientists surveying the Sunderbans for its unique flora and fauna iii) the urban tourists who visit the land for recreation. The novel shows how the landscape of the modern day Sunderbans is not only frequented but is also somehow controlled by the dynamics of all these groups, working individually or often in collaboration with each other. On the other hand, the local settlers of the Sunderbans lack agency and are coerced into a lifestyle that is molded by these elite groups. While all these groups frequent the Sunderbans for radically diverse interests, what connects them is that they carry the same trajectory of subaltern marginalization that has continued from the colonial times to the post-Independence period to a modern era of neoliberal globalization. *The Hungry Tide* brings out a complex web of power over the landscape where the poor fishermen like Fokir are pushed to the margins and rendered silent in the narrative space.

Officially assigned by the state, the forest guards exert ultimate control over the landscape of the Sunderbans and their surveillance duties are primarily directed towards patrolling common people’s access to the forests. Like their colonial predecessors, the
landmark forest legislations in Independent India---the Indian Forest Policy Resolution of 1952 and the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972--have mainly remained mechanisms for restricting popular admittance to the forests. As Richard Haeubar argues, post-independence Indian forest policies saw to it that “traditional tribal rights to forest use and products had been limited even further than under colonial rule, changing from privileges to concessions” (61). These laws were essentially based on the notion of the “ecologically profligate tribals” (Rangarajan 211), in contrast to a protectionist colonial state, that has been the central rhetoric of forest conservation in India.  

Thus, the colonial conservation model had long laid the blame of environmental degradation on the indigenous communities that have traditionally depended on the wilderness for their survival. Eurocentric conservationists have routinely projected these communities and their livelihoods as the main causes behind soil erosion, overgrazing, depleting forests and as a threat to the natural wildlife (Guha; Shiva; Tucker).

The overwhelming presumption in this discourse is that the indigenous populations squander the natural resources and hence an authoritative state control should protect and own the forests. As a consequence, once the state enclosed lands ‘reserved’

67 Guha(1996) narrates how such accusations were often accompanied by a pejorative tone, as was seen in a description by a a prominent member of the Sierra Club who attacked the Masai for grazing cattle in the sanctuaries: ‘“The Masai and their herds of economically worthless cattle”, he said, “have already overgrazed and laid waste to much of the 23,000 square miles of Tanganyika they control, and as they move into the Serengeti they bring the desert with them, and the wilderness and wildlife must bow their heads before their herds”(126).

Valuable evidence supportive of jhum, established by eminent ecologists, Madhav Gadgil and P S Ramakrishnan, and historian Ram Guha -- or even works of pioneers like Verrier Elwin -- have been blackballed.
for conservation, it also restricted the ‘unwanted’ indigenous practices of the local forest
dwellers and barred their access to the same forests that have traditionally been their only
means of subsistence for ages. P.K Tripathy sums up the trajectory of oppressive forest
laws in India, asserting that at first they regulated and then denied tribal rights on the
forest and the produce of the forest: “The tribal were alienated from the forests which had
provided over ages fodder, fuel, building materials, agricultural implements, medicines
and even the most important requirement for existence—food to them.”(84). Thus, the
state yields sole discretion over permits, over decisions of land use, and forest clearance,
over the selection of trees that are commercially more viable and control over the
substantial population of forest dwelling people. Not only did the forest authorities, right
from the colonial times, criminalized the local foresters who trespass the restrictions even
for subsistence, there have been multiple studies that document how the people are
unjustly harassed and exploited by the more powerful and often corrupt forest guards. As
K.G.Karmakar points out:

    The Forest Act has created an entire bureaucracy with very wide-ranging powers
and the power to make laws! A forest officer without warning may arrest any
person against whom a reasonable suspicion exists, and order a month’s
imprisonment. They can seize forest produce, cattle, tools, cart etc if a forest
offence has been committed. No civil suit can be lodged against them…Such
draconian powers have placed the tribal people under the oppressive power of the
forest bureaucracy. And there are always unscrupulous officers who could exploit
the hapless tribals. (114)
The Hungry Tide brings out this grim picture of exploitative forest officials who reign over the forest and often terrorize the local inhabitants. As Kanai humorously asserts, there is a common idiom among the islanders that “if you’re caught between a pirate and a forester, you should always give yourself up to the pirate. You will be safer” (245). The novel narrates various instances of atrocities meted out by the forest guards to the poor local people, most prominently seen in the incident with Fokir’s boat. Having spotted Fokir’s humble row boat in an area which was supposed to be off limits for fishing, the forest guards pursue the poor, unarmed fisherman with rifles and instantly labels him as a “poacher” (25). Not only that, they rob him of the little money he was carrying in his boat and physically abuses his child who tries to hide the money from the guard’s prying eyes. The forest guards reappear in the narrative scene several times later in the novel, but only as ruthless law-enforcing authorities who claim ultimate control over the landscape, terrorizing the poor villagers in the name of maintaining law.

If the Forest Department embodies the menace of global environmentalism in terms of local oppression, the American scientist Piya embodies the limitations of the archetypal postcolonial migrant and questions the very epistemological privilege of a transnational position. A student of California Ocean Institute, Piya is interested in the Sunderbans for its unique ecosystem that provides a natural habitat for the subject of her research----the species of Orcaella brevirostris dolphins that inhabit the rivers there. Piya’s stint as an American cetologist involves travelling all over the world—especially in faraway, unexplored terrains of the non-Western lands— to track these dolphins and study their habitat closely. Consequently, she interpretes the Sunderbans solely in terms
of its potential for successful fieldwork and for gathering scientific data, her character thus echoing the quintessential colonial scientific explorer of in many ways.

Scientific explorations, mostly accompanied by the productions of descriptive and detailed natural history in the new continents, have been in vogue in the European nations since the eighteenth century. While the eighteenth century voyages of James Cook and Jean Francois de La Perouse’ were one of the earliest ones to be termed as ‘scientific travel’, they merely set the model for modern, well-equipped scientific expeditions of several other traveler-scientists like Joseph Banks, Humboldt and , who were spurred by imperial Europe’s increasing interest in the unique landscape and species, flora and fauna of the new continents. Roy McLeod traces it to the information explosion of the sea faring Europe that brought “glimpses of a world beyond the seas, whose artifacts produced, using the term of Ram Kuhn, giant anomalies, puzzles for philosophers of Europe (119)…Traversing by extension the Linnaean system and the Newtonian world view, the program was to settle for all time the shape and texture of the earth and to catalogue its flora, fauna and inhabitants” (128). Consequently, new species were collected and exhibited, empirical studies on the new lands were methodically documented—like in the Philosophical Transactions published by the Royal Society—and scientific societies were found to pursue the study of what Said calls as the academic discipline of the “science of the Orient” (155). Significantly enough, as Mary Louise Pratt argues deriving from Foucault’s The Order of Things, these scientific explorations were essentially attempts to interpret and thereby control the newly discovered world.
through the paradigms of European epistemology. Asserting that natural history was an intervention to compose order, Pratt argues that:

The eighteenth century classificatory systems created the tasks of locating every species on the planet, extracting it from its particular, arbitrary surroundings (the chaos) and placing it in its appropriate spot in the system (the order-book, collection or garden) with its new, written secular European name…The (lettered, male, European) eye that held the system could familiarize (“naturalize”) new sites/sights immediately upon contact, by incorporating them into the language of the system. (31)

Since scientific study rendered the unknown new world as classifiable and therefore controllable, McLeod and many other scholars identify these scientific ventures as a characteristic feature of the colonial period, furnishing “both a means of conquest and a method of settlement (128). Notably, as Gary Dunbar points out, the prominence of the disciplines like “the geography of the third world” or “geography of developing countries” (167) in Western Universities from the end of 1960s show a continued interest in the geography and biodiversity of the former colonies as a major research interest in the Western academia. Simultaneously, several organizations based in the industrialized, global North—like United States Agency for International Development (USAID), National Science Foundation (NSF), Biodiversity Support Program—sponsor numerous research projects to study and conserve the ecosystems in third world countries by using the protocols of Western science (Hannigan 152).
An American researcher sent on a funded project to study the animal life of a remote terrain in India, Piya embodies the archetypal Western scientist researching on third world flora and fauna. Piya not only represents the long tradition of imperial scientists who studied and documented the bio-systems of India, she also declares herself as a metaphorical descendant of that trajectory. Calling Calcutta as her “cetacean pilgrimage” (188), Piya idolizes the imperial naturalists like William Roxburgh and Edward Blyth who had dedicated their lives in the study of nature in the colonies. Pablo Upamanyu Mukherjee aptly points out that in idealizing “these eighteenth and nineteenth-century British naturalists, geographers and scientists” who are very much part of the grand narrative of enlightenment—selflessly working in hostile environments for the enlargement of the frontiers of knowledge—Piya overlooks the deeper nuances of colonial and imperial knowledge-gathering:

how is the classifying of species also a part of the epistemology of imperialism?

What lines of power connect naturalists such as Edward Blyth, the dolphins he studies, and the crowd of his Indian helpers? How do the museums and botanical gardens (we recall Kim’s jadoogarh here) created by these botanists replicate an imperial environment? Piya herself, kitted out with the latest GPS monitor, range-finder, depth sounder and binoculars, literally embodies the panoptical knowledge-machine of colonialism. (152)

Piya views the whole landscape of the Sunderbans exactly through the same lenses as the colonial naturalists, and consequently implements the same imperial methods of recording her experiences in the new land. She scours the alien rivers in search of the
gangetic dolphins, interprets a random group of dolphins by a predetermined model of classification and records her experiences through an established scientific language. Filtering all her experiences through the lens of an scientific explorer, Piya’s gaze necessarily constitutes what Foucault calls the discourse of “seeing things systematically” (134) or the systematic classification and tabulation of a new environment, rendering “the whole area of the visible to a system of variables all of whose values can be designated, if not by a quantity, at least by a perfectly clear and always finite description” (137).

Piya not only records her gaze as part of her allegiance to the Western discourse of science, she also attempts to gain access in the foreignness of the land through an authority she claims from the certainty of her knowledge. As Foucault aptly observes in the context of colonial Natural history, the authority derived from the positivism of scientific classification is not merely limited to “the discovery of a new object of curiosity; it covers a series of complex operations that introduce the possibility of a constant order into a totality of representations. It constitutes a whole domain of empiricity as at the same time describable and orderable” (162). Piya’s gaze is both directed and limited by the paradigm of this scientific order—while on the one hand her tendency of classifying her world around the dolphins accounts for her cosmopolitanism and the ease with which she moves between the national borders, on the other it severely narrows her gaze. As Piya scans the Sunderbans with the same tools and observations that she applied in all her field trips from Mekong to Mahakam to Irrawaddy, she perceives these different geographical locales as homogenous, be it in terms of locating the dolphins, interacting with the forest guards, the generalized idea of the local people
and her own role and status as an American researcher. Consequently, as Piya organizes
the bigger picture around her methodological perception of things, she ends up with an
impaired vision that misses out the complex specificities of a locale. Piya is thus baffled
by the oppression of the forest guards over the poor fishermen of Sunderbans, finds it
difficult to understand why the local villagers would want to kill a tiger and is confused
by Fokir’s ambiguous relationship with nature. Piya’s initial interaction with the
landscape is essentially that of an outsider foreign to the nuances of the land and its
people.

Piya’s scientific gaze is not only restricted but also one of assumed authority. Ar
med with her modern equipments of gathering data and her training in scientific
classification of species, Piya exudes a confidence and sense of superiority in claiming
superior knowledge about the dolphins, even more precisely than the local villagers
themselves. Piya’s assumed authority is evident in her usual frustration with the apparent
lack of information among the local villagers, who fail to contribute to Piya’s ventures
with the wild animals. While the villagers’ inability to provide useful information about a
local animal might have been thwarted by the methods Piya would use to gather such
information—namely by her use of the typical American pedagogical tool of display
cards that often made no sense to the villagers—Piya promptly assigns the failure of the
villagers to their presumed lack of total knowledge about the animals: “as a rule only the
most observant and experienced fishermen were able to make the connection between the
pictures and the animals they represented. Relatively few had ever seen the whole, living
creature, and their view of it was generally restricted to a momentary glimpse of a
blowhole or a dorsal fin” (29). Consequently, Piya’s alliance with Fokir in her research project is based on Piya’s assumption of her own superior scientific knowledge over Fokir’s. Confident that she knows better than the local villagers, Piya thus relegates Fokir only as her boatman and a navigator, much in the same manner as colonial scientists would employ indigenous people as guides and informants, but “rarely did their conceptions of the natural environment become an object of study in themselves” (Miller and Reill 12). Fokir’s relationship with Piya is thus one of hierarchy—Piya pays him and employs him only to navigate the river in her own way, often to the extent of holding him back for days together to complete her own work. But never does Piya initiate any interaction with Fokir in terms of procuring indigenous knowledge. Fokir’s own paradigm of indigenous knowledge thus remains contained in the realm of the myth and folklore and unintelligible to Piya. Piya’s inability to understand Fokir’s language, and in extension his worldview about the mythical import of the local animals, symbolizes the deep chasm that lies between the two paradigms of knowledge, whereby the domain of the local indigenous remain marginalized and indecipherable to the Western epistemology, unless the indigenous is translated into the hegemonic language of English.  

68 See Raje Kaur for a discussion of the significance of language and translation in Ghosh’s The Hungry Tide. Kaur argues that the polyphous import of the novel in terms of the various languages used by its characters essentially suggest the theme of miscommunication in the narrative. Consequently, the translator Kanai plays the role of go-between not for Piya and Fokir but also acts as an agent of alliance for the global and the local
The deep disjuncture between Piya’s notion of the environment and the local people’s interaction with nature once again invokes the blind spots of a global meta-narrative of environmentalism that fails to address the local specificities. Piya’s shock at witnessing the public lynching of a stray tiger by the local villagers, including Fokir, and her consequent virulent condemnation of it invokes the same dichotomy between biocentrism and anthropocentrism that forms the crux of the debate regarding Morichjhapi. Ghosh invokes this very debate about the dichotomy, not only in Kusum’s indictment of the Project Tiger and the way the Morichjhapi incident testified the pitfalls of a biocentric ethics over an anthropocentric one, but also in multiple times throughout the narrative through Piya’s notion of environmentalism that encompasses the central tenets of American “deep ecology”. Piya’s argument for biocentrism over anthropocentrism is built on the critique of human chauvinism in exploiting the natural world, which essentially precludes that the ‘human’ in question here is a privileged one who has complete control over the resources, who has been rendered arrogant by his power and therefore needs to make more morally compassionate choices. Thus, in her debate with Kanai regarding the Sunderban residents’ hostility towards the tigers, Piya harps on the same rhetoric of human hubris—“Just suppose we crossed that imaginary line that prevents us from deciding that no other species matters except ourselves? What’ll be left then? Aren’t we alone enough in the universe?” (249). Yet, what Piya initially fails to understand is that the conflict between the humans and the tigers in the Sunderbans is hardly a matter of human arrogance and rather a question of survival. Instead for Piya, it is the poor local villagers who pose the greatest threat to nature,
meting out tortures of “horror” to the “defenseless” wild animals (248). Thus, while Kanai argues for a more compassionate approach to environmentalism—asking pertinent questions like “isn’t that a horror too that we can feel the suffering of an animal, but not of human beings?” (248)—Piya’s position is strictly biocentric and it is not until the very end of the novel that she rises above this dichotomy to embrace a more comprehensive model of environmentalism. Not only does Piya advocate for wildlife, she also emphasizes that global conservation is in the best interests for the marginal people themselves, thus projecting herself as the spokesperson for the people Kanai seemingly defends. As Guha asserts:

This is an ecologically updated version of the White Man’s Burden, where the biologist (rather than the civil servant or military official) knows that it is in the natives’ true interest to abandon their homes and hearths and leave the fields and forest clear for the new rulers of their domain…the biologists, park managers and wildlifers—to determine collectively how the territory is to be managed. (How Much Should 16)

The assumed authority of Piya’s initial position thus points to the way environmental decisions are dictated by the biologists who in their power become equally oppressive as a forest ranger for the subsistence based forest dwellers.

Apart from the forest officials and the NRI scientist, the landscape of Sunderbans is also accessible and dominated by ecotourists who operate as consumers in a market. Significantly enough, in her ways of traversing the landscape for its distinct fauna and engaging with the local population in terms of commercial exchange, Piya is also no
different from the commercial ecotourists that visit Sunderbans for its unique environment. Though physically absent in the novel, the tourist is an essential component of the life in the Sunderbans. The novel suggests a total commercialization of the forests of the Sunderbans, which has spawned an expansive tourism industry. The forests attract hundreds of tourists each day and the economy of the Sunderbans is majorly influenced by ecotourism. Thus, while even the local politician Mejda draws his daily subsistence from the tourist launch, which Piya describes as “a decrepit diesel steamer that had been adapted for the tourist trade, with rows of plastic chairs lined up behind the wheelhouse, under soot-blackened awning” (28), the tourism industry also prompts fishermen like Horen to move away from their traditional profession to become part of the neoliberal market. Thus, as fishing declines as a sustainable profession, Horen relies on not his catch but rather on Megha, his tourist boat that carries picnickers who visit the islands as a holiday getaway. For Fokir too, tangible income—in terms of the international currency of three hundred dollars (175)—comes in the form of Piya’s offer to navigate the landscape much like a tourist. It is thus the carefully maintained wilderness of the landscape that ensures the capital flow in the Sunderbans. Ghosh portrays a contemporary Sunderbans whose wilderness is not only distinctive but also essentially saleable, be it to the leisurely tourist or the impassioned scientist, both of whom are drawn to the unique selling point of the biosphere. The fanfare of provisions for the tourists and the touring scientist stands almost in ridiculous contrast to the inhuman eviction of the landless refugees from the same topological space of the Sunderbans. As a writer and social critic, Ghosh has been immensely critical about the selling out of the Sunderbans for
commercial tourism. In a telling essay that exposes the politics of privatization in the Sunderbans, Ghosh critiques the Sahara group of companies and the West Bengal government for launching a multimillion rupees project of a tourist complex in the Sunderbans. Lashing out at the preposterous idea of building a tourism project in a landscape infested with wild animals, dangerous rivers and frequent cyclones, Ghosh also objects to the project on the grounds of how it marks the larger politics of neoliberal privatization:

   It is scarcely conceivable that a government run by the same Left Front is now thinking of handing over a substantial part of the Sunderbans to an industrial house like the Sahara Parivar. It runs contrary to every tenet of the Front's professed ideology. The Sahara Parivar's project would turn large stretches of this very forest, soaked in the blood of evicted refugees, into a playground for the affluent. Although forgotten elsewhere, in the Sunderbans the memory of Morichjhapi is still vividly alive: would it be surprising if the people there took this project to be an affront to their memories and a deliberate provocation? (“A Crocodile in the Swamplands”)

Ghosh’s novel draws on this sharp contrast between the desirability of the tourists versus the abjection of the refugees—respectively defined as groups who act as consumers and bring in capital, versus groups who are non-productive occupants of the landscape—suggesting a commoditization of the landscape in the trend of neoliberal ecotourism.

   As the reserved forests and the wildlife account for the marketability of the Sunderbans, and the consequent conversion of the landscape into a consumable
commodity in the neoliberal market, the enthusiasm for global conservation suggests a deeper connection with the market forces in the form of ecotourism. Even in the colonial times, conservation of nature was often done with a motive of rendering natural resources as a marketable commodity. As John MacKenzie observes, conservation ensured that “access to animals was to be progressively restricted to the elite” as games for their hunting or used as “tourist resources” in national parks (215). Though the marketing of preserved wildlife and forests as a tourism industry has been justified as a significant source of self-funding required to meet the costs of a noble, yet expensive, project of biodiversity conservation (Wiersma 3), it is too simplistic to view the nexus between conservation and the market as solely a non-profitable venture. Rather, MacKenzie points out that from their very early days, some lands reserved for environmental conservation, especially the national parks, were meant specifically for tourism and generating profit. Thus he asserts—“there was a considerable market for viewing animals” (266).

The trajectory of marketing the natural resources has magnified in the current era of neoliberalism, whereby neoliberal ecotourism has become a well-developed industry. Neoliberal ecotourism thus aims at conservation of nature precisely for the market value it carries to ecotourists who are willing to pay to see and experience the uniqueness of natural landscapes. Ecotourism is part of what Kathleen McAfee terms as “natural capital” (133), referring to the trend of commercializing nature as a part of the project she calls as “green developmentalism” (134), whereby nature is sustained and protected solely for the purpose of rendering it globally marketable, and thus essentially to generate global capital. While ecotourism often involves collaborative alliance of the global
financial giants as the World Bank, private companies and the national governments for environmental sustenance, it is also a process of converting the landscape to a consumable commodity essentially for the elite. As McAfee points out—“by valuing local nature in relation to international markets—denominating diversity in dollars, euros, or yen—green developmentalism abstracts nature from its spatial and social contexts and reinforces the claims of global elites to the greatest share of the earth's biomass and all it contains”(132). Echoing McAfee’s statement, Rosaleen Duffy observes the marginalization of the socio-economically weak in her study of ecotourism in Madagascar that belies the whole rhetoric of community good that is often presented as an argument for ecotourism:

while community-based ecotourism implies a high degree of public participation, critics have pointed out that communities are very rarely given the chance to respond meaningfully to schemes that are supported by governments and/or the private sector. In this way, the community-based ecotourism often only benefits a narrow elite because the political nature of decision making processes often excludes communities and their interests. As a result, many community schemes have developed a tokenistic form of participation (Hall, 1994:167-71; Hutton et al, 2005). Such minimal participation then allows tour companies, NGOs and donors to claim that the ecotourism schemes they support actively involve local communities, in line with international definitions of what constitutes ecotourism. (103)
Ghosh’s novel portrays a similar marginalization of the local subalterns like Fokir in a landscape that is driven by the market forces and consumer tourists.

Unable to fit into the market, unlike the other local inhabitants like Horen and Mejda, Fokir essentially remains as an aberration in the productive economy. Apart from the rare incident of being involved in Piya’s project, Fokir hardly participates in the market and essentially remains outside it. Fokir’s plight as an aberration to the productive society projects one of the most serious consequences of the global commercialization of the natural world. As Marcia Langton points out, conservation groups driven by the market interest often target small scale indigenous groups and demand for “suppression of traditional forms of wildlife exploitation”. The consequent deterioration of small scale hunting and gathering natural resources amounts to “environmental racism” and a territorial marginalization of these groups dependent solely on these traditional economic means. In a landscape dominated by conservationists, forest officials and tourists, Fokir’s traditional vocation as a non-commercial fisherman not only becomes increasingly difficult but it is also perceived as an act of criminality. Simultaneously, unable to fit in the market, Fokir is also constantly perceived as unemployed and as one wheeling away his time, and who fails to play the expected role of the male provider of the household. As Nilima describes him condescendingly: “a fine young fellow except that he could neither read nor write and made his living by catching crabs” (107). Fokir’s ‘non-productivity’ is repeatedly compared to his wife’s successful venture of generating ‘productive’ labor through an active participation in the networks of the market—where the government, NGOs and consumers collaborate together to the productivity of the
economy. Fokir, on the other hand, relies on indigenous means of subsistence and is relegated to the margins of the economy. Thus, in addition to poverty and ignominy, Fokir is also a silent figure in the entire narrative, symbolizing the magnanimity of his almost erased existence in a landscape dominated by the forces of modernization and globalization. What Pablo Mukherjee observes in the context of Velutha in Arundhati Roy’s *God of Small Things* can be applicable to Fokir as well, for Fokir, like Velutha, stands “between the categories of ecosystem people and ecorefugees” (26), whereby modern development has turned the subsistence groups into “ecorefugees” (27) who have no means to support themselves anymore.

Even the apparently emancipatory final resolution of the novel fails to shift the power dynamics completely. Ghosh concludes the novel with Piya returning to Lusibari with more funding for Sunderban’s development and a deeper insight into how globalization affects the local realities. Consequently, she moves away from the meta-narratives of environmentalism to focus more on the contextual issues of the local people, proposing a developmental model which will aim at providing employment and support for the poor, local groups and will involve the participation of the local people like Moyna in crucial roles of its operation. Thus she informs Nilima about the funding offers for such a development model from global conservation and environmental groups and declares emphatically: “If I was to take on a project here, I’d want it to be under the sponsorship of the Badabon Trust, so the local fishermen would be involved. And the Trust would benefit too” (327). The solution though promising is not full proof, since it ultimately ensures elites like Piya and Nilima, and not the local fishermen themselves,
heading the project and in the supreme control of the funds, whereby the project becomes another developmental project imposed from above and does not signify a change from below. Yet, Piya’s realization at the end of the novel is indicative of the larger shift in environmental discourse from its global view to a re-contextualization of concepts according to the specificities of the local conditions. Moreover the alliance between global funds and local development points towards a more collaborative future and a less exploitative globalization. As Raje Kaur asserts:

In the end, when Piya and Kanai commit themselves to helping the tide country people, and to strengthening Nilima’s NGO efforts to provide basic health care in the region, social justice and ethical ecological commitment coincide in a new ecocritical paradigm where global entrepreneurs and cetologists can become conscientious collaborators with local underclasses towards mutually beneficial goals. (137)

As the novel ends with the happy union of Piya and Nilima, it projects a future of a better environmentalism—whereby the NRI and the NGO channelize global capital into the landscape, not as a part of the market, but rather for a more inclusive structural emancipation for the marginal, no matter how utopic.

The two novels, *Animal’s People* and *The Hungry Tide*, thus address two crucial debates about environment in the age of contemporary globalization. While the criticism against the ecological exploitation of the global corporations in the “third world” have been much more loudly voiced, Ghosh’s novel significantly points out the tacit repression of the forces of global environmentalism as well. In both cases it is the marginal groups
who have been overlooked by the global forces—rendered into an insignificant absence when larger powers of globalization decide their fate. Consequently, these novels also project discourses of resistance and subversion, both pointing towards a more emancipatory, hopeful future for the marginals under globalization.
CONCLUSION:

Summarizing Marginality under Globalization

This dissertation thus explores the 'new' literatures of “post-postcolonialism” that depict the changes and issues of economic globalization in the context of the India. Placing itself in the context of a global turn in postcolonial literature, as well as a paradigmatic shift in postcolonial studies, this dissertation seeks to address the materialist concerns of neoliberal globalization—such as the inequality of economic growth, the implementation of neoliberal modes of citizenship, the ideological import of global media, the gentrification of the postcolonial cities, the penalization and surveillance of the marginals as criminals, environmental devastation by global corporations as well the dispossession of the marginals for global environmentalism—as they are represented in the literary texts of post-liberalization India. At the center of the narratives of these post-millennium novels is the figure of the marginal subject who is invoked in a variety of ways, projecting the various victimizing effects of neoliberal globalization on the lives of the common, underprivileged people. Let us sum up the various representations of marginality that we have discussed in the dissertation, whereby the marginal subject becomes an emphatic signifier of the discriminating power dynamics of globalization. Consequently, let us also discuss how the fictional representation of the marginals in the novels point to some of the important concerns and threats of economic globalization that
are out in the real world.

Novels like Adiga’s *The White Tiger* and Swarup’s *Q&A* are stark exposés of the two halves of people who inhabit the post-liberalization India: the privileged, affluent half who enjoys a better quality of life with the availability of modern amenities and consumer products that have gained unrestricted access in the Indian market with liberalization; and the impoverished, underprivileged marginal entities who are not only deprived of the prosperity apparently brought in by globalization but are further pushed to the margins of more deprivation. Though both the novels project problematic and often improbable solutions to the severe disparity of contemporary India, both of them are successful in depicting the bleak realities of the Indian underbelly—who in their poverty, inhuman living conditions and dispossession, challenge the myth of the equalizing powers of economic globalization. Globalization has often been critiqued on the basis of how it creates further polarization of the rich and the poor. Globalization’s notion of the “trickle-down theory”—in which it was claimed that the benefits of free trade will trickle down to the poorest of the poor—has been summarily rejected by many critics. The IMF itself acknowledges that globalization has failed in many countries—“Living standards and the quality of life … are stagnating in a number of the poorest countries, in particular in Africa. Some African countries are even regressing. The income gap between the rich and the poor has never been so great” (Larsen). Similarly, economists like Joseph Stiglitz criticize “the devastating effect that globalization can have on developing countries and especially the poor within those countries” (35). Similarly, some of the other impassioned critiques of neoliberal globalization—like Noam Chomsky, Robert Hunter Wade, Susan
George, Kevin Watkins etc have criticized the process, specifically for its detrimental effect on the poorer and marginal sections of the society. However, it is not only in terms of economic prosperity that the poor are excluded; neoliberal globalization has immense influence in the restructuring the socio-political milieu of the participating nations, leading to an overall “social exclusion” for the marginal citizens. Globalization has thus, as Munck argues, created immense inequality, whose full impact can be understood only in terms of how certain sections of society are not only excluded from the economic benefits of globalization but also experiences a “multidimensionality of deprivation” (21). Consequently, the margins have been strategically excluded from the ‘progress’ that neoliberalism so proudly proclaims. The erasure of the marginal groups as entities for consideration in the political and economic decision making constitutes an extreme form of marginalization and an utter disregard for the peripheral lives as existences worthy of even acknowledgement. As the neoliberal system primarily privileges the upper and the middle classes, the concept of development under neoliberalism also prioritizes these more productive, profit generating classes. Consequently, developmental activities

69 Here I use the term as EU officially defines it: “Social exclusion is a process whereby certain individuals are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination. This distances them from job, income and education and training opportunities, as well as social and community networks and activities. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and thus often feel powerless and unable to take control over the decisions that affect their day to day lives” (“Social Exclusion and Cabinet Office” 2). Ronaldo Munck points out that though the term originates in the Western and especially the European Union context, the concepts can be aptly applied to the various modes of marginalization and exclusion in the global south as a result of neoliberal globalization.
undertaken to profit the market typically overlooks the issues of the peripheral groups, rendering them almost absent as important factors for consideration.

Asserting the symbiotic relationship of capital and the civil society, Mohan Dutta argues that “capital must continuously create conditions of subalternity” for its own sustenance. Marginal groups have thus been relegated to spaces of obscurity and silence in the global economy: “Subalterns, therefore, exist in the interstices of modern civil societies, rendered invisible through the lack of access to the discursive spaces of the mainstream public sphere where issues are debated and policies are formulated” (184).

The hegemonic forces of economic globalization have often pushed the marginal groups and indigenous populations to the periphery in the “nation-state’s strategic efforts to advance the interests of the middle class” (McMillin 91), creating a form of exclusion that almost amounts to their invisibility. The gradual erasure of the marginal, as Rajni Kothari verily theorizes on what she calls as the “growing amnesia” towards the poor and marginalized sections in India, is summarily evident in the drive for ‘modernization’ in globalized neoliberal India. On a similar note, Leela Fernandes asserts the “politics of forgetting” that relegates the disenfranchised to greater obscurity:

The visibility of the urban middle classes sets into motion a politics of forgetting with regard to social groups that are marginalised by India's increased integration into the global economy. The politics of forgetting in this case does not refer to processes in which particular places or nations are left out of economic globalisation. Rather, it refers to a political discursive process in which specific
marginalised social groups are rendered invisible and forgotten within the dominant national political culture. (2416)

The politics of forgetting, as Fernandes emphasizes, is not only a process in which certain sections are excluded of economic globalisation. Rather “it is a political project that seeks to produce a sanitised vision of the economic benefits of globalisation” (2416). The marginal groups are thus rendered ‘absent’ when they become misfits and liabilities in the middle class dream of a ‘modern’, ‘progressive’ India.

The exclusion of the marginal groups in the developmental projects is seen in its worst form in novels like Tejpal’s *The Story of My Assassins* that provides an impassioned portrayal of the lives of the marginal groups in an Indian city that is in the process of renovating itself according to the tenets of neoliberal urbanization. As the city modernizes itself in the model of global cities in their glitz and the glamour, in the growing spaces for commercial activities and leisure, and in the privatization of public spaces reserved for affluent, elite consumers, the poor, homeless and low income groups in the urban spaces are evicted, quarantined and even incarcerated. Tejpal’s novel projects the repressive urban policies that are imposed on the city spaces in India in the era of globalization, whereby Indian cities desperately attempt to reinvent their labels of a third world city and strive to become world class cities complete with all amenities and extravagances. Consequently, the urban poor find no legitimate space within the city space and are constantly targeted by local authorities and the police to the point of vengeance. Tejpal’s novel is a moving testimony of how the urban development projects under neoliberalism are particularly oblivious of the plight of the poor and the marginal
communities which are the worst affected in the drive for ‘modernization’ of the cities. As Erik Swyngedouw and et all point out in their study of the thirteen large scale urban development projects (UDPs) in twelve European Union, the cities were developed and beautified for its elites and the investors coming from outside, while the unaesthetic poor and marginal presences were wiped off to invisibility from the city space:

Accommodation of the EU’s encroaching office expansion in Brussels, the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao, the new financial district in the Dublin’s docklands, the science-university complex Adlershof in Berlin, Copenhagen’s Orestaden project, and the 1998 World Expo in Lisbon, among many other examples that are dotted over the map of urban Europe, testify to the unshakeable belief of the city elites in the healing effects that the production of new urban complexes promises for the city’s vitality. (546)

In a similar fashion, Aditya Nigam points out that Delhi in the year 2000 presents a picture of rapid 'developmental' activity, with multiple flyovers of different shapes and sizes being constructed along the inner Ring Road and outer Ring Road, as well as in several other parts inside the city (41). This picture of development, as Nigam points out, is completed by “hotels, posh commercial complexes and shopping malls, displaying familiar signs of giant global chains that mark any first-world city, within and in suburbs like Gurgaon and parts of Noida”(41). Quite predictably, this development had nothing to do with the welfare of the poor and rather lead to an eviction of a large crowd of poor and low-income laborers from the landscape. Similarly, Gautam Bhan narrates how a Delhi government project of 2003 to convert the public strip of land by the Yamuna into a
riverside promenade, meant to be a major new tourist attraction, lead to an eviction of 35,000 families – more than 150,000 people consisting mainly of the homeless people and the daily wage workers “construction workers, rickshaw pullers, domestic workers and ragpickers or recyclers” (127-8). As Bhan’s satellite image of the place after the eviction shows (128), the settlements were cleanly erased, leaving no trace of their existence—as if these people had never existed in the first place. The neoliberal city has thus been variously called “revanchist” (Smith 42)—that is revengeful in its dealings with the poor, homeless and other marginal populations of the city space—and a “postjustice city” (Mitchell 58), referring to the same tyrannical policies of neoliberal states that not only punishes and oppresses the marginal sections but also eliminates the notion of social justice and pushes the margins to almost the point of extinction. The aggressive policies of the state and local governance seek to control and contain the marginal populations within designated spaces—imposing a penitentiary regime on them through penalties, evictions and dispossession.

In another form of repression and exclusion in economic globalization, the marginal communities are left to their fate when their land is traded away and their environments affected by multinational global corporations, in collaboration with the state. Indra Sinha’s novel Animal’s People depicts the horrors of Bhopal Gas Tragedy—one of the biggest industrial disasters of the recent years, when a poisonous gas leaked out of a factory of the Union Carbide (a branch of the multinational firm DOW) killing thousands of people overnight and leaving thousands others adversely affected for years. The novel portrays the terrifying tales of damage that the gas has wreaked mostly among
the poor and factory workers, who were the worst affected in the disaster, and the constant struggle of the victims for compensation and justice for more than 2 decades. As the poor people suffer and claim their rights, both the corporation and the state remain nonchalant, shrugging their responsibilities off the people and the polluted environment. Multinational corporate developments, especially in the developing nations, often act amnesiac to the existence of the marginal groups in the regions. A global summary of corporate developments all over the world testify the various instances in which the marginal and indigenous groups were totally disregarded in the decision making process—from the mining corporations of Australia to the oil corporations in Nigeria, from the Camisea project in Peru to the corporate extraction of natural gas in Bolivia, marginal populations have not only been sidelined but rather strategically forgotten and rendered insignificant in the colossal corporate process.

There have been several instances in the context of India as well, where the poor, the marginal groups, lower castes and Adivasis have been summarily ignored by the state in its rhetoric of neoliberal development. The Narmada Bachao Andolan, going on for almost more than two decades now, protests against the World Bank funded project of building of Sardar Sarovar Dam which has and still has the potential to destroy thousands of tribal homes and lives. Started with the rhetoric that the dam would benefit agricultural populations in India, the project ignored to involve the villagers, tribals and local inhabitants in the decision making process, leading to a unilateral decision by the state in favor of the project. Similarly, the recent controversy surrounding the Korean Steel Plant POSCO also stems from the alliance between the corporations and the state to set up
aluminium factories in a heavily populated tribal forest area, Niyamgiri, without taking into account the consent or objection of the local people themselves. Though the forested mountain Niyamgiri happens to be the main source of livelihood, as well as the sacred landscape, for numerous indigenous people, and though the building of the factories would mean wide scale displacement, privatization of the landscape and contamination of the water resources from the factory wastes, the state has turned a blind eye to the demands of these people and have granted permission for the building of the project. There are several other instances where the interests and even the existence of the indigenous and marginal populations have been strategically ignored in the state’s drive to promote neoliberal development. Goldy George gives a glimpse of the immense inequality embedded in the concept of development in India:

Mining projects, power plants, dams, defense projects, wildlife management, botanical gardens, bio-experiments, eco-tourism, etc has displaced large population across the country. For example in Chhattisgarh alone almost 17 lakh acres demarcated for wildlife conservation consisting of 250 villages with an approximate population of 50,000 had already been cleared off. Ten major dams acquired 2,57,032.585 acres of land affecting 238 villages and their rehabilitation has not yet been done. Thirty medium projects impacted 123 villages with an acquisition of 32,745.13 acres. These statistics are of 2000, which has gone several multiple by now.

An impassioned critique of this inequality also comes from the eminent ecologist Vandana Shiva, who asserts that “economic globalization has become a war against
nature and the poor”. Associating the exploitation of the poor with the exploitation of the environment, Shiva argues in one of her essays how the corporate land grab policies in India shows an extreme disregard for both the poor as well as the ecology (“The Great Land Grab”). Consequently, Shiva interprets the contemporary land acquisition laws as emanating from the colonial era, which in itself was an exploitative regime, and argues that the state “forcibly acquires the land from the peasants and tribal peoples and hand it over to private speculators, real estate corporations, mining companies and industry.” The narrative of ‘modernization’ and economic growth in India is thus a tale of erasing the marginalized and the indigenous, whose existence ceases to matter in the drive for corporate globalization and expanding the free markets in India.

Ironically enough, it is not only corporate exploitation that refuses to acknowledge the existence and rights of the marginal sections. The global conservation movements—that aim to protect the environment and the natural biospheres, even in opposition to the corporate onslaught for profit—often assume repressive forms for the marginal groups of the global south. Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* projects the brutality meted out by the Indian state on the subsistence based marginal communities, all in the name of following the protocols of global directives about environmental conservation. Ghosh depicts the historical incident of the Morichjhapi killings, where refugees from Bangladesh—who had ‘illegally’ settled down on lands reserved for wildlife—were mercilessly butchered by the state police to secure the land back for the conservation, mostly because of the pressures from global environmental groups. The brutality of the eviction in the novel points out to the a startling story of what happens
when forces of globalization—even in the form of conservation drives—dictate their terms to the nations of the global south. National conservation drives like India’s *Project Tiger* are mostly dictated by global conservation policies which, as scholars like Rangarajan and Mark Dowie point out, are often imposed on the developing nations of the global south by the northern environmental groups like the WWF International and Greenpeace. Consequently, these conservation endeavors do not acknowledge the forest dwelling tribals and indigenous groups who need to be ruthlessly evicted and deprived of their primary means of livelihood—the forest itself—in order to create safe biospheres for the wild life. As Mark Dowie points out, global conservative initiatives favoring the preservation of wildlife have led to various instances of mass eviction for the indigenous and forest dwelling groups. Providing the examples of Nagarhole National Park, Semarsot, Kanha, Sariska and other National Parks in India, Dowie asserts that millions of people—mostly the tribals—living inside India’s formally protected areas were evicted as the forests were cordoned off. Calling them as “conservation refugees” Dowie provides a disturbing statistics of a staggering number of people dislocated due to global conservation efforts—around “300,000 families around India had experienced similar forced relocation to protect the habitat of tigers, rhinos and Asiatic lions residing in the 580 national parks and sanctuaries that have been created in India since the colonial period”. The eviction of the marginal groups and the conservation of nature become all the more significant since conservation in the contemporary era is often associated with eco-tourism—which is a specific mode of marketing the forests and natural resources as Edenic tourist attractions. In Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* too, the landscape of Sunderbans
becomes an important profitable destination for ecotourism that gives justification to the conservation of the forests, even at the cost of repressing the local marginals. As Rosaleen Duffy points out, ecotourism is part of the neoliberal globalization that commoditizes nature as part of the global capital flow and is often funded by the financial giants like the World Bank to generate profit—ecotourism relies on the neoliberalisation of nature through the transformation of natural resources into privately owned and globally ‘marketable goods’ (327). Consequently, as Duffy points out, neoliberal ecotourism in Madagascar, Botswana and Thailand have marginalized the local communities and has lead to an appropriation of their interests by the NGOs, the state and the private sector who claim to represent the interests of the marginal groups by foregrounding their own interests. Jim Igoe and Dan Brockington’s ‘Introduction’ to the special issue on neoliberal conservation in Conservation and Society, enlist multiple the several essays in the volume that cite instances from all over the world on how conservation and the commoditization of reserve forests and wildlife sanctuaries have not only pushed the peripheral groups like the local farmers and the indigenous population to the edges, but have also usurped their means of livelihood:

Berlanga and Faust present a case in which local people in Yucatan, Mexico worked to start a protected area only to see it taken away by the federal government and its benefits appropriated by outside investors. Grandia's study introduces us to Guatemalan peasants who have been displaced by commercial tree farms established to offset carbon emissions…In her research in Zanzibar, Levine found that 75 per cent of the people in Mnemba Village viewed a privately
managed island that was a protected area as a business venture that excluded them for the benefit of tourists. …Finally, Buscher and Dressler's work reveals Mozambiquan villagers being displaced by the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park, while private companies in South Africa benefited from business ventures 'under the guise of community-based natural resource management'. (435)

Thus, the global drive for conservation and ecotourism has ignored the marginal groups just like the forces of corporate globalization. Neoliberal globalization lays its claim over the environment as well, yet with complete disregard for the local marginal groups who seem to be most affected from the changes brought in by the corporatization of nature.

However, apart from depicting how the marginal groups are dispossessed and repressed in the process of modernization and ‘development’ in India under globalization, the novels like *The Story of My Assassins* and *Sacred Games* also project how entire sections of the marginal populations are conceived as dangerous and potential criminals, and are thereby made targets of covert social control like surveillance. It is important to note that though the socio-economically marginalized entities are often excluded and repressed in the process of globalization—precisely because neoliberalism prioritizes the productivity, entrepreneurship and consumerism of the middle and upper classes over notions of social justice—the onus of poverty and deprivation in neoliberalism is nevertheless put on the poor, whereby the poor are often constructed in a negative light as possessing deplorable characteristics. The negative image of the poor is often entangled with the notion of the “culture of poverty” (Lewis 199) whereby the poor themselves are
considered to be responsible for their own states.\textsuperscript{70} Originally proposed by Oscar Lewis in the 1960s, the “culture of poverty,” refers to the inherent negative attributes of the poor—like laziness or lack of aspirations to work, criminal tendencies, inaptitude, bad lifestyle choices, potential for criminality—that have been responsible for the poverty of certain groups for generations together. Significantly enough, the notion of the ‘culture of poverty’ generalizes entire groups of populations as possessing deplorable characters, immorality and being prone to violence and criminality. Consequently, the neoliberal society promotes an elaborate system of surveillance of the potentially criminal, ‘undesirable’ marginal subjects, invoking Foucault’s concept of the panopticon, whereby the criminals would become objects of gaze by the authorities. Roy Coleman’s interesting book titled \textit{Reclaiming the Streets: Surveillance, Social Control and the City} explores how closed circuit televisions in important public places redefine the notions of public space, social control and the objectification of the potential miscreants as objects of gaze. The idea is to control crime even before it occurs, with the system conceptually based on the notion that certain minority and low class groups are potentially criminal, and hence worthy target objects for surveillance. The theme of surveillance of certain sections of the

\textsuperscript{70} Richard T. Schaefer aptly defines it: “central to this thesis is the belief that these pathological and maladaptive values and behaviors are passed down from generation to generation, becoming self-perpetuating barriers that prevent the poor from taking advantage of improved conditions or opportunities” (363). The thesis of the “culture of poverty” witnesses a renewed resurgence in the argument of discontinuing state sponsored welfare programs in the era of free market. As Marieke de Goede points out, works like Gilder’s \textit{Wealth and Poverty} make an argument against the welfare state, claiming that the social security systems and welfare systems lead to easy access of funds and lack of work motivation, and lock the poor into a culture of poverty—the logic being “once the poor have been induced to the wrong behavior by the liberal welfare state, this lifestyle becomes self-perpetuating” (327).
population is taken up in varying degrees by both the novels *The Story of My Assassins* and *Sacred Games*. *The Story* depicts surveillance as a reality of the fictional Delhi, where potentially disruptive populations are kept under constant vigilance and are quarantined in certain geographical areas, and kept off limits from the core areas of the city which are exclusively meant for the elite crowd.

While many Indian novels of the post-liberalization era depict the exploitation, repression and injustice meted out to the marginal groups, often by invoking historical events or real life facts, a contrasting portrayal of the marginal characters in post-liberalization Indian novels is that of the astounding success story of the poor protagonist, who makes it big in the new ‘shining India’. The novels *The White Tiger* and *Q&A* are similar in their themes in the way that the central protagonists in both the novels hail from the poorer and backward groups of Indian society, and yet rise up the social ladder. Both Balram and Ram Mohammad, the main characters and first person narrators in the novels, start with extreme poverty and underprivileged circumstances. While Balram comes from a backward village in the interiors of India, being denied the basic rights of education and equality, and exploited as a child laborer, Ram Mohammad is a poor orphan living the life of a vagabond, travelling from one to place to another in search of livelihood and shelter. Yet, in a fascinating turn of events, both the protagonists rise to economic success through the new opportunities of financial accomplishment that have opened in India post-liberalization. However, although the novels project astounding success stories of its poor protagonists, celebrating the startling social mobility brought in by global capitalism, these novels also problematically portray a vision of marginal
emancipation based on the notion of the salvaging of a select few, while the rest of the socio-economic conditions and its impoverished crowds remain the same. Consequently, these novels project a problematic rejection of the overall structural development of the communities, an oversimplification of the identity of the Indian marginal, and a fierce individualism of the protagonists who are amoral to the point of committing crimes for their own benefits. In celebrating globalization through their success stories, these marginal protagonists are constructed as the spokespersons for globalization and its neoliberal ideologies. The ideological import of these novels and such representations of the marginal become crucial issues for analysis when taken in the context of how the rhetoric of neoliberal globalization is persistently built on the figure of the subaltern.\textsuperscript{71}

The prominent presence of the essential category of “the poor” pervades the rhetoric of economic globalization. It’s interesting to note how “the poor” stands for a universal signifier of economic marginality, and how this category gets repeatedly invoked to justify any form of capitalistic intervention in any context, anywhere, any time in the world. Thus, the Director of the Europe office of IMF, Flemming Larsen, justifies the IMF policies as a mission for equalizing benefits, especially to help the “poorest”. Similarly, the World Bank Director of Development Policy, David Dollar asserts:

“Activists who care about the poor in the developing world should be trying to make it

\textsuperscript{71} I use the extended definition of the ‘subaltern’ as “groups of people who exist outside of a society’s hegemonic system, often because of poverty or ethnic discrimination (Rodriguez, "From Representation to Recognition” \textit{The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader}, 5 ). Traditionally, they have been misrepresented, if not excluded altogether from academic research and study, which is conducted by intellectuals who themselves are generally a part of the dominant hegemonic system (Latin American Subaltern Studies Group 119).” [\textit{Who is the subaltern?}]}
easier - not harder - for them to access US and other rich markets”.

The rhetoric replicates itself in several accounts, for example Jagdish Bhagwati’s *In Defense of Globalisation* invokes “the poor” on several counts, and even goes on to provide multiple images of “the poor”—like the “impoverished parent” and the “battered wife”(59), ---to make an emotional case for globalization. As the figure of the marginal and his/her testimony grow in importance in the new ‘Empire’, Spivak asserts that the discursive category of the subaltern must be rethought. Thus Spivak claims in ‘A New Subaltern’ that “Today the ‘subaltern’… is no longer cut off from lines of access to the center. The center as represented by the Bretton Woods agencies and the World Trade center, is altogether interested in the rural and indigenous subaltern” (326). The penetration of global capitalism –the New Empire— in the guise of the World Trade Organization, NGOs, bio-research companies, UN Development projects and human rights organizations – into the lowest levels of society is responsible for producing what Spivak terms the ‘new subaltern’ (276). Not only is the subaltern rendered as the site for global exploitation, the discourse of the concrete experience of the subaltern is constructed as a

72 Jerry Mander and Devi Banker retorts to this rhetoric: “During the past few years, we have heard steady proclamations emanating from the advocates of economic globalization and leaders of the Bretton Woods institutions -- the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), et.al . -- that their deepest purpose in pushing economic globalization is to help the world's poor. More specifically, they contend that removing barriers to corporate trade and financial investments is the best path to growth, which they say offers the best route out of poverty. They also assert that the millions of people who have visibly opposed the economic globalization model are harming the interests of the poor. Everyone should please back off and leave it to corporations, bankers and global bureaucracies to do the planning, and solve the world's problems”.

rationalization for globalization. As Spivak observes, once at the centre of nationalist policies, the ‘Third World Woman’ is now mobilized in the name of a global capitalist agenda (200). The practice of extending credit to Southern women through the World Bank and NGOs, without the establishment of any infrastructure to facilitate reform, accounts for such global intervention into the grass root levels. Not only that, “an alibi for globalization is produced by calling on the testimony of the credit-baited female” (255).

The marginal subject thus has immense potential to validate the new “Empire” as an emancipating force for the socio-economically marginalized of the developing nations, though the material realities might be highly debated. Consequently, the figure of the marginal is appropriated in the pro-globalization rhetoric that projects the underclass successfully courting social mobility for himself, thus embodying an emphatic version of neoliberal hope of progress for all. Both WhiteTiger and Q&A project how the figure of the marginal subject is appropriated as a poster-child for endorsing the emancipatory powers of neoliberal globalization.

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73 See “Revisiting the subaltern in the new empire” by Jill Didur and Teresa Heffernan for a more detailed discussion of Spivak’s theorization of the subaltern in the new Empire.

74 The rhetorical aspect of invoking the testimony of the marginal becomes crucial since most scholars—whether pro or anti globalization—agree on the fact that globalization has not been universally beneficial for the poor all over the world. Whether the failure of globalization in the global south is due to the structural flaws of the developing nations or globalization’s very notions of economics is a matter of debate, but all economists—including the financial organizations like IMF and World Bank—agree that globalization has not been successful universally.
However, not all the novels that I study in this dissertation portray the appropriation of the marginal by the neoliberal rhetoric, or the exploitation and dispossession of the marginal under economic globalization. Instead, the novels like Animal’s People and The Hungry Tide convey a strong message for “globalization from below” whereby people join together in resistance on a transnational scale to insure “a viable future for people and the planet” (Brecher, Costello and Smith). Both Elli (Animal’s People) and Piya (The Hungry Tide) leave their American origins and ‘first world’ lives to connect and work for the peripheral people of India, joining in their daily battle for existence against an oppressive state, an exploitative neoliberal market, profit driven corporations, privileged elites and multifarious forces of global magnitude that seek to dictate and affect their lives. While Elli tries to contribute with her knowledge of medicines and by being an active member of the Bhopal activists’ group that had been staging political protests for justice, Piya collaborates with social worker Nilima to woo capital for her NGO, not for profit but for a subversive purpose of contributing to the development of the local communities of the Sunderbans. Both cases testify that while on the one hand globalization signifies the hegemonic processes of global capitalism, on the other hand it also spawns multiple counter-movements of local struggles of common people exploding on a global scale, drawing in people from diverse geo-political locales to form transnational networks of resistance. Consequently, such networks of resistance challenge the “Empire” (Hardt and Negri) from becoming an unchecked imperial system of unmitigated power, for as Hardt and Negri assert, the Empire is constantly challenged by “the revolutionary nature of the multitude, whose struggles have produced Empire as an
inversion of its own image and who now represents on this new scene an uncontainable force an an excess value with respect to every form of right and law” (394). The “multitudes” by themselves might not match the power of global capitalism, but their battles are worthy enough in generating a solidarity of resistance—for as Brecher, Costello and Smith emphasizes “it requires linking together in the manner of the Lilliputians in Jonathan Swift’s fable Gulliver’s Travels, who were able to capture Gulliver, many times their size, by tying him up with hundreds of threads”. As long as the ‘liliputs’ unite in resistance, the ‘Gulliver’ of neoliberal globalization can still be kept under check.
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