



INTRODUCTION

In Indian context, the city in literature admittedly did not enjoy as much prominence as its western counterpart. There was no fully fledged city in India before the era of colonization. However, colonization produced urbanization. Though confined to small pockets in nineteenth century, it proceeded apace and eventually delivered cities to match with the best in the world, cities like Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai and Delhi.

The Indian city grew as a seat of power or as an administrative centre or as a market place. British rule brought with them new technology, institutions, knowledge, beliefs and value system. The new technology, the opening of Suez Canal and the construction of railway network integrated the country within and with abroad. Indian cities slowly emerged as commercial and industrial metropolis in the mid 19th century. The contribution of British is visible in this regard. As M.N Srinivasa points out;

British slowly laid the foundations of a modern state by surveying land, settling the revenue, creating a modern bureaucracy, army and police, instituting law courts, codifying the law, developing communications-railways, post and telegraph, roads and canals-establishing schools and colleges and so on. The British also brought with them the printing press, and the profound and many sided changes this brought about in Indian life and thought deserve a volume in itself. One obvious result was that books and journals, along with schools, made possible the transmission of modern as well as traditional knowledge to large number of Indians-knowledge which could no longer be the privilege of a few, hereditary groups-while newspapers made people in different parts of far flung country realize they had common bonds, and that events happening in the world outside influenced their lives for good or ill. (*Social Change* 49)

The modern university in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras was founded in 1857 as a product of its

imperial connection and function of modernity. Modernity denotes some characteristic practices which emerged during 18th century Enlightenment in Europe like; the rise of capitalism, science and rationality, secularism and liberalism. As a part of imported British Enlightenment in India, the age old superstitious belief of self immolation of *satee* was abolished. David Washbrook points out "colonialism was not a superficial experience, easily cast off with the sailing of the British from India's shores, but deeply affected the process and institutions associated with Indian modernity." (*History, Culture and the Indian City* 252)

TWO COTERMINOUS TERMS: INDUSTRIALISATION AND URBANIZATION

Two terms which are concomitant to each other are industrialization and urbanization. The industrial revolution resulted in increased rate of urbanization. Modernization was synonymous with urbanization. As a part of it new institutions, for example newspaper, schools, law courts were not only introduced but also the old institutions underwent fundamental changes. The reservation of education for upper class children became public during British rule. Those who attended new educational institutions, took up the jobs of bureaucracy, and engaged themselves in trade, commerce and industry in big and developing towns. The British law prioritized the humanitarian aspect, especially equality with its intention to prevent higher class to take advantage of the lower class.

Geographically speaking, those who stayed in coastal towns like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras experienced modernization earlier than other who lived in interior areas. These three presidency towns attracted larger Indian population who showed their affinity towards trade, commerce, educational and other opportunities. The growing middle class in port towns were doubly advantageous as they were associated with ruling elites and they had prospects in job and business that enhanced their social status. People who lived in towns had more access to modernization than those who lived in villages. The bigger was the town the greater the influence.



As a result of rapid urbanization their sense of community began to break down. The urban community far from being cohesive was constituted by tension and conflict, exploitation and violence. The urban elites formed their own groups in the city centres. They manoeuvred to engineer the organization of public space with their dominance. Indian city literature reflects these contradictions and paradoxes.

Although European cities flourished as the products of eighteenth century Enlightenment, the same was reflected in India roughly after hundred years. The Indian cities expanded and flourished in late nineteenth century as products of British imperialism. It was supported by the spirit of progress and advancement. Emphasizing, the power of reason and technology, the Enlightenment thought improved the city and brought wealth into it. What Richrad Lehan emphasizes was that the city was organized on the principle of natural right rather than birth right;

Many of the ideas of the city came to us in the form of Enlightenment speculation. As we have seen, the Enlightenment highlighted two ideological shifts. It stressed reason and rationality, science and technology; and it shifted the emphasis from birth rights to the natural rights of the individual. The Enlightenment became the ideological cornerstone of the new nation of America and the basis for what would become the liberal tradition- the right to pursue, relative unencumbered, a sense of self. (Lehan 83)

COMPLEXITY AND INDIAN CITY

With time, the Indian city developed in such a way that it became nearly difficult to define it. The city became one of the most powerful symbols of complex society. It was too vast and complex to be thought of as a literary figure. The city was undoubtedly a mixture of culture and nature. Studying the city image was very important and difficult job. The city images were primarily confusions, blurred boundaries, breaks in continuity, isolations, ambiguities etc. For Krishna Mohan

Pandey, "The city is a work of art, an artifice. It is a machine for living in. The design of machine, the task of the architect planner, is critical for the quality of life lived." (*City as Kaleidoscope* 13)

My study on Indian cities intends to explicate the kaleidoscopic range of reality of the city. The city is considered to be heterogeneous one. The city is presumed to be a place of wicked people, rogues and culprits. One can earn a living in the city but it is the place for corrupt people. The city separates people from the world. The tag of the wicked city for its trade, thieves, atheists and concubines etc. is always there with Indian city. As A.K Ramanujam points out;

The city itself is found functional order by occupation, contrasting with city founded and planned according to an imposed geometric order. Instead of ritual, festivals and bards, we have drama, game and song. Instead of sacred literati, we have the impression of a cosmopolitan intelligentsia, accustomed and hospitable to foreigners, enjoying and accepting variety in tread as in women, pleasure and lifestyle. (*The Collected Essays* 68)

Sudesh Mishra points out, "it is scarcely possible to discuss modernism without discussing the literature of the city." (*Preparing Faces* 68) The city is always a metaphor of self's condition. The writer narrates the mundane, monotonous routine city life. The writer's self meets with other either in contradictory ways or analogous ways. For Nissim Ezekiel, the city is a significant metaphor;

His city Mumbai is a barbaric city sick with slums; it has million purgatorial lanes, yet it is the city where he seems to gain his real identity and wants to mind its ways as an ideal citizen. In Ezekiel's poetic journey Bombay acquires many shades of meanings: it is "purgatory"; it is "hell to be made tolerable"; it is a "pretty lively place/ A man could be happy there"; it is the fruit the taste of which he wants to have continuously on his tongue. Bombay as a static city, Bombay in flux, Bombay as a



social reality exhibiting its ugly rich-poor contrast, 'nature' in the city, man's alienation in the city- all these are effectively represented in the word-city of Ezekiel. (*City as Kaleidoscope* 18)

Various writers have multiplicity of opinions on city. The city is a hybrid colonial city the tension of cultural encounter goes sour in the city. The writers are aware about urban man's predicament and give a kaleidoscopic view of Indian reality.

READING INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE AND LOCATING CITY

In Rushdie's introduction to his edited *Vintage Book of Indian Writing: 1947-1997*, he identified parochialism as having the greatest impact in regional writing. What he had in mind was that Indian Writing in English offered the pan-Indianness in the setting, the context and the overall themes vis-a-vis regional writing. At a later point, indicating the anxiety of Indianness that most writers in English had, Meenakshi Mukherjee further pointed out that the absence of a regional locale or even the absence of a known regional readership that made Indian Writing in English lag behind regional writing at least in a certain way. There are these two diverse viewpoints that we do have in the context of Indian Writing in English as of now.

It is possible to identify certain patterns across periods from early 1930s onwards. The setting in the early novels was mostly rural India. It was country life which was getting prioritised over the urban life. The rural setting was seen as more responsive to the nationalist movement. It was seen as the place where it was easy to talk about Indianness. It is the rural setting that is the representative of Indian life. We find this in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) which is entirely set in the village Kanthapura. Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) also focuses on a small town. We find Narayan inventing a small fictional village; later it becomes a sort of town, a semi urban place which is Malgudi. So the setting in the early novels was almost village centric, away from all the vices of the city, from everything which is not urban.

We do find this gradually changing and in the contemporary times it would be quite safe to say that most writings are city centred. There are urban locales. Of course we have certain novels such as Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English August* (1988) or Shashi Tharoor's *Riot: A Love Story* (2001) and Amitav Ghosh's *Hungry Tide* (2004), where the setting is away from the city, from the metropolis but the story revolves around a city bred modern secular male. That really brings a lot of urbanness even to the narration. There is a kind of city centreness which becomes the part of storytelling process. In contemporary literature we also find that this shift from the village setting has been to the large metropolitan cities of Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi. In the list we find Adiga, presenting Bangalore as one of the emerging urban centres. We also find writers like Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Jhumpa Lahiri, Amit Choudhury mostly focussing on Calcutta. Bombay also emerges as another important centre particularly in the novels of Rushdie, Anita Desai, Vikram Chandra and many others. These writers do not always worship the city; they also try to expose the elite world within city. They highlight two things; one a strong sense of individuation that is definitely seen as a positive thing but the flip side is that a sense of community is getting completely lost; the other is the rise of moneyed class that evaluates the human relationship as an investment. They do not present city in a nostalgic way, being critical of what the city offers.

The focus on a particular cosmopolitan city setting can be seen in two ways. There is a certain degree of regionality and local flavour which gets introduced. At the same time the characters of these metropolitan cities also give a certain kind of pan-Indianness to the entire setting. Timothy Brennan uses the interesting term 'the third world cosmopolitans' to talk about these kind of writers and there certainly is a kind of urban cosmopolitanism which can be celebrated in most of these writings. Unlike the earlier writings where they place the novel in an entirely rural background, we do not find the contemporary writers operating under such a compulsion. It could be because of the kind of experiences and the exposure that the



current writers have undergone. It has also to do with the fact that English is increasingly emerging as metropolitan language.

REMEMBERING THE VERNACULAR

Before 1930s or broadly speaking before the appearance of holy trinity of Indian English literature Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004), R.K. Narayan (1906-2001) and Raja Rao (1908-2006) the Indian novels were mostly written in vernacular languages. The early generation of creative writers by the time turned to their mother tongue, even if they were English educated, to enrich their literature by introducing new genres, poetic forms and narrative modes. They by and large conceded of the view as Meenakhee Mukherjee points out, "The 'vernaculars' thus could be perceived as the repository of interiority and imagination, and English as a rational and functional tool for polemics and persuasion." (*The Perishable Empire*, 9) As the popular saying go in India 'mother tongue was natural vehicle of self expression' two famous writers of pre 1930s Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94) and Michel Madhusudan Dutt (1824-73) made a 'false start' by beginning their career in English but later on shifted to their mother tongue and established them as famous writers in Bengali. Being influenced by Bankim Chandra another famous Bengali writer Romesh Chandra Dutt wrote in Bengali and gained considerable fame. The novels written by these novelists are basically situated in rural landscape and deals with the affairs of country folks.

The best known early novelist in India whose work can be considered as modern is O Chandu Menon (1847-1899). Written in Malayalam, his novel *Indulekha* (1889) represents modernity as arising out of the integration of East and West. Both the major characters of the novel *Indulekha* and Madhavan were English educated and had modern outlook. As the novelist was a member of British judicial service, he conceived the two main characters as an ideal combination of Western and indigenous. But the setting of the novel was village and the plot revolves round the matrimonial tie between Nair women and Nambudiri men.

CONCLUSION

Amid the rush behind urban setting, It became increasingly important to represent the rural, the rustic, the non urban as an Indian space. But critics point out, however, there is a lopsidedness in the contemporary settings, in the contemporary presentation in the narrative allocations because there is an over prioritisation of the urban at the cost of almost ignoring the rural. The focus here is particularly to see how certain metropolitan cities have been seen as the most preferred setting as far as Indian writers in English are concerned. Roshan G Shahani, who wrote "Polyphonous voices in the city: Bombay's Indian-English Fiction." points out that as novelists are creating Bombays of their imagination, the city is fashioned in the writers own image;

Indian writers in English should not be seen in a privileged relationship to regional language writers; nor is the relationship one of competition. There is space and validity for both kinds of experience. If culture is to be truly pluralistic and if Bombay is to epitomise that plurality, then writers in English have legitimate right to 'appropriate' the city. The question is not one of the territorial rights. (1250)

There is certainly a purpose which is getting served. This purpose is quite akin to the nationalist project that we can identify in most of the contemporary writings where the nation gets narrated in particular ways, where the presentation of city also by extension becomes another imagined place where the action happens.

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