

**From One-Horse Town to Metropolis: a Study of Persons
and Places in Select Novels of Anjum Hasan**

Divya S.

(12PEN004)

Thesis submitted to

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education

for Women, Coimbatore – 641 043

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Arts in English

March 2014

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S. Kalamani
31-03-2014

**Signature of the
Head of the Department (i/c)**

MAJ 30/14

**Signature of the
Supervisor**

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CONTENTS

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	TITLE	PG. NO
I	INTRODUCTION	1
II	SHILLONG	25
III	BANGALORE	53
IV	CONCLUSION	79
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	88

CHAPTER I

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

India has a rich heritage of literature. This affluence is owing to the multitude of languages in India. Every language has its own literature and tout ensemble, this constitute a large fortune. Further, the aftermath effect of English colonial rule has added another language which in turn has been used a raw material for creating many literary products. The advent of English language in India has augmented the literary legacy considerably.

The history of India entered into a new era with the announcement of Lord William Bentinck to teach Indians “the knowledge of the English literature and science through the medium of English” (Singh 13). “Lord Macaulay thought that the product of such education would be Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and intellect” (Singh 13). English language has had the support of such leaders and writers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, through them the English language developed.

English has made the literature world global, in true sense. The results of the cultural estrangement are the East – West encounter, identity is nostalgic outbursts etc. Some of these writers are trendsetters and determine the authority of idealism, realism, naturalism, and modernization etc. Evidently, these writers have reached across the world through their writing. Indian writing in English has its possess self-governing identity; it has no effortless simulation and derivation, but it has a big expedition from colonial to post-colonial, from imperial to democratic and from English to Hinglish and formed a history of world literature. Tagore is the first recognition as Derozio initiator and Naipaul is the recent laurel.

Arvind Krishna Mehrotra says “The exposure to English colonialism necessitated some Indian writers to discover prose, the realist novel and poetry whose grafts they inserted in their tropical languages where they have since flourished. Other writers with a similar social background and with the same Macaulayan education reversed the procedure as it were, and sought to tie and wax themselves to an English stem” (Patil 78). *The Hindu* Apr 7, 2013 portrays “The age of the e-zine”, Amit Baishya, Features editor of *The Northeast Review*, says, “Part of our endeavour is to encourage new ways of critical thinking about literary traditions - both ‘established’ and ‘under-represented’.”

Indian Writing in English has a considerable place for women writers. Of late, the number of women as writers is increasing rapidly. Women writers themselves have long been involved in tracing a woman’s tradition in writing. India formed a great number of novelists in the 19th century. As F. W. Bain said, “India, a withered trunk . . . suddenly shot out with foreign foliage” (Javalgi 1). Indian Writing in English, especially fiction, is gaining ground by leaps and bounds. Yet Indian English literary scene bristles with amazing anomalies and curious contradictions.

Indian women novelists have attained a significant position in the realm of fiction. They have given a generous contribution to the growth and the enhancement of Indian novels especially in English. The main focus of these writers is to establish self-identity through prominent women characters who assert their own individual fighting against the existing social order of the day. Women writers have tended to limit their characters to achieving what they could within the confines of family life and daily routine of Indian society.

The most noticeable characteristic of the contemporary Indian English fiction has been the appearance of the feminist literature. These novelists try to voice out the sufferings, aspirations and assertions of women in a traditionally male dominated world. In the book *Contemporary Indian English Novel*, Brahma Dutta Sharma and Susheel Kumar Sharma declares:

Though Indian English novel remained male-dominated for quite some time, as all the major English novelists in the Pre-Independence period including the three greats, namely, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand came from the male section of the society, yet in the Post-Independence period there have appeared on the horizon of Indian English novels a number of women writers who have made a significant contribution in the field and have a definitely enriched it a great deal. They include Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Bharati Mukherjee, Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Gita Mehta, Kusum Ansal and Arundhati Roy. (74)

Kamala Markandaya is a well-known writer who deals with two kinds of cultures – one is cultural heritage and the other is accidental by habitations. Primarily, she focuses on India's quest for its true identity in the context of cultural changes. Her fictional characters compete for their identity. A socio-political undercurrent runs across her works conveying messages and provoking thoughts. Her entire creative work reflects her love and reverence to the native country India.

Markandaya's works include *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), *Some Inner Fury* (1956), *Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession* (1963), *Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Cofferdam* (1969), *The*

Nowhere Man (1973), *Two Virgins* (1973), and *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977). Her novel, *The Nowhere Man* reveals the evil and ugly nature of racial prejudice; and it is not a protest expressed in a smooth way, but an angry protest against the worldwide problem of racial hatred. This distinctive feature has assigned her a significant place among Indo-English novelists.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala is a contemporary of Kamala Markandaya. She is the first woman novelist of India to win the prestigious Booker Prize and she won the award in 1975 for her novel *Heat and Dust* (1975). Her novels and short stories are *To Whom She Will* (1955), *The Nature of Passion* (1956), *Esmond in India* (1958), *The Householder* (1958), *Get Ready for Battle* (1962), *A Backward Place* (1965), *A Strong Climate* (1968), *An Experience of India* (1971), *Heat and Dust* (1975), *Three Continents* (1987), *Poet and Dancer* (1993), *Shards of Memory* (1995), *My Nine Lives* (2004) and so on.

Jhabvala has lived in India and her life and experiences in this country are recreated in her works. For this reason, her portrayal of Indian character, Indian family system, the Indian society, and the Indian sensibility is estimable. In the article of *An European Eye on Indian Soil* Pramod Kumar Singh observes, “She has an excellent ear for the rhythms of Indian speech and an ardent eye for the modes of cultural behaviours of Indian society” (84). In her novel, she ironically expresses that living in India does not mean sharing the Indian vision of life.

Nayantara Sahgal is well-known for her novels. She fundamentally deals with the theme of politics. She is also known as a successful political columnist in different newspapers. She is distinguished by her style of writing with simplicity and boldness. Her works deal with a wide gamut of themes ranging from personal dilemma and problems, joys and sorrows fulfilment and frustrations of female protagonists to the political upheavals that India has experienced since

Independence. Her works are, *From Fear Set Free* (1963), *A Time to Be Happy* (1963), *This Time of Morning* (1965), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), *The Freedom Movement in India* (1970), *Rich Like Us* (1985), *Mistaken Identity* (1988), *A Situation in New Delhi* (1989), *Lesser Breeds* (2003).

Shashi Deshpande is a well-known name in the stream of Indian literature. She has published her first collection of short stories in 1978, and her first novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* in 1980. She has been trained as a journalist and her work focuses on the reality and truth of the lives of Indian women. She won the Sahitya Akademi Award for the novel *That Long Silence* in 1990 and the Padma Shri award in 2009. Deshpande's other notable works include *If I Die Today* (1982), *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983), *The Intrusion and Other Stories* (1993), *Small Remedies* (2000), *A Matter of Time* (2001), *The Binding Vine* (2002), *Moving On* (2004), and *In the Country of Deceit* (2008). She depicts Indian woman as a mute victim who knows to bend down to the male-dominated society.

Arundhati Roy who won the Booker Prize in 1997 for her novel *The God of Small Things*, has also written two screenplays and several collections of essays. Her characters are able to convince the readers as to how to assume feminist significance by reason. Her novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) reveals the abnormal psychology of men and women in the typical Indian society. In the decade following that momentous achievement, Arundhati Roy has become an ardent advocate of social and economic justice for the country's oppressed minorities.

Manju Kapur who has won the famous Commonwealth Writer's Prize for her novel *Difficult Daughters* in 1998. She is presently working as a Professor of English in Delhi University. The novel is autobiographical like Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. Her

other novels are, *A Married Woman* (2003), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008), and *Custody* (2011). She effectively describes the personal subtleties especially the psyche of a woman. She also manages to merge the internal psyche of an individual with the external world.

Anjana Appachana is a well-known novelist. She has been a burgeoning name in Indian Writing in English. Her first book *Incantations and Other Stories* (1991) is set in the early eighties of India. Her first novel and second book *Listening Now* was published by Random House in 1997. One of her short stories titled *Sharmaji* was included in *Mirrorwork: 50 Years of Indian Writing 1947-1997*, a collection edited by Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West. She received the O. Henry Festival Prize and a creative writing fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in the United States. Her works generally deal with the ordinary Indian woman's dreams, passions, and frustrations.

Shobha De is an Indian novelist, copywriter, freelancer and columnist. She is best known for her columns in *The Week*. The most important driving force of her novels is the psycho-sexual stream. In 1988, she shot into literary renown with her first novel, *Socialite Evenings* which is Lawerencian in expression. She is known as the India's Jackie Collins and 'The Maharani of Muck'. Her other prominent works are *Starry Nights* (1989), *Sultry Days* (1989), *Sisters* (1992), *Small Betrayals* (1995), *Second Thoughts* (1996), *Surviving Men* (1998), and *Snapshots and Selective Memory* (1998).

Gita Mehta has emerged as an Indian English Novelist of considerable worth representing the postmodern aura. Her novels *Karma Cola* (1979), *Raj* (1989), *A River Sutra* (1993), and *Snakes and Ladders: Glimpses of Modern India* (1997) have brought her much fame. The river

in *River Sutra* is the river of life. *Raj* is about the transfiguring knowledge of her protagonist in post-colonial India. In *Karma Cola*, she focuses on the East-West encounter.

Anita Desai is an Indian novelist and short story writer, who has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize three times. She has been awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1978 for her novel, *Fire on the Mountain*. Her notable contributions to the field of Literature are: *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965), *Bye-bye Blackbird* (1971), *The Peacock Garden* (1974), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), *Cat on a Houseboat* (1976), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Games at Twilight* (1978), *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *The Village by the Sea* (1982), *In Custody* (1984), *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), *Journey to Ithaca* (1995), *Fasting, Feasting* (1999), *Diamond Dust and Other Stories* (2000), and *The Zigzag Way* (2004). Her novel *Fire on the Mountain* and won the Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize. Her children's book *The Village by the Sea* won the Guardian Children's Fiction Award.

Today, the regional novel is a well-established art form with some of the greatest novelists of England as its devoted votaries. It could have been rightly expected that with the obliteration of regional and local differences following the mass use of swift means of communication - the car, the railways, the aeroplane and the radio and the television. The regional novels of great worth and significance continue to be written. E. C. Booth, Mary Webbe, Thomas Moulton, Sheila Kaye Smith, Constance Holme, Frances Brett Young, are a few of the more prominent practitioners of this form in the modern age.

Geographically, India is a country which has been divided into four pieces - North, South, East, and West. In addition, North-East India is another division which lies in the remote North-Eastern. It is associated with Eastern part of India which stretches to Nepal and

Bangladesh. It is comprised of seven states and also popularly known as ‘Seven Sisters’. The seven states are – “Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland. The seventh Sister, Tripura, was the Princely State of Tipperah” (Shibly 1). North-East India is identified for its unique culture, handicrafts, material, arts and scenic beauty. However, these cultural benedictions are eclipsed with the veto of political disturbances. Further, it appears to be have been estranged socially from rest of India, “North-East India faces not just political, economic and cultural marginalization but even historiographical marginalization” (Nag 17).

North-East India is proud of its literary tradition. Assamese Literature has a whole corpus as a collection of written works like poetry, novels, short stories, documents and other writings in the Assamese language. In addition, there are ballads which mark the evolution. Assamese language can be traced back to the 9th and 10th century in the Charyapada. Likewise, other North-East Indian languages claim antiquity of their literature. It has great contribution from Missionary Literature as well. Atful Hye Shibly quotes to Jean Baptiste Tavernier’s quote:

The kingdom of Assam is one of the best countries in Asia, for it produces all that is necessary to the life of the man without there being need to go for anything to the neighbouring states . . . all peasants of Assam are at their ease and there is scarcely any one who has not a separate house in the middle of the land, a fountain surrounded by trees and even the majority keep elephants for their wives. (2)

North-East is affluent with several languages. “The capital city Shillong houses almost all the languages of the North-East India as well as other Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages” (Haokip 3). The three ethnic tribal groups have their own traditional and political institution.

These institutions are well residential in various tiers like village level, clan level, and state level. “The Meitheis were the most advanced section of the ‘Kuki-Chin people’ whose ultimate homogeneity with the Nagas and Kukis of the hills is undoubted” (Nag 36). The term North-East is purely geographical. This writing has hardly been in limelight. Since 2008, national magazines and journals have taken unprecedented amount of interest in writings from this region. Several national news magazines have featured special issues on writers from North-East. The profusion of literature from North-East has also generated immense interest within and outside the nation.

Literature is a kind of communication among thinkers, readers, and writers. The political instability and up surging violence is reflected in the literature of North-East India. Senior Editor of *Zubaan*, Preeti Gill states ‘To say that the North-Eastern states are different from the rest of India in almost every way is to state the obvious, but it is important to recognize that these ‘differences’ have created rifts, giving rise to insurgencies, demands for secession from the Indian state and years of internal conflicts and discontent. Further, she remarks, ‘Writers across Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura are deeply concern about the brutalization of their societies and have been confronting these issues upfront’.

At present, the Literature of North-East India focuses on violence as a thematic concern. The Literature of North-East India which has gained a set of ascendancy in the last three decades and especially in the last one and a half decades has shown a glut of interest in the remaining parts of the country due to this ‘new’ ontology and cult of violence. It is believed that writers of North-East India use violence to emasculate themselves from it.

There is an observation that this writing which describes violence has been a practice among the old North-East Indian writers. Whereas, the young writers participate in experiments

with writing. The novelist Birinchi Kumar Barua in *The North-east: A Tale of Two Literature*, remarks, “The most regrettable state of affairs in modern Assamese poetry is that while the older poets have practically ceased to write, the younger poets are still in the experimental stage. New poetry in the true sense is still to be born in Assam” (27).

The new literature in English has sprung from the staccato cry of machine guns and it reveals the changes across the landscape. The poet Desmond Kharmawphlang who coin the term ‘terror lore’ has narrated the stories of fear, insecurity, and hostility. Few of the literary works explain the brutality as well. The Post-Colonial period insurgencies and counter-insurgency operation have a great impact on the lives of the individuals living in North-East India. In 1970s, some of the poems the poems reflect mostly about violence.

Temsula Ao is a poet and novelist. All her works are based on green forest and North-East India. She also divulges the problems and complexities from women’s lives. She has received Padma Shri Award in 2007. She has also won the Prestigious Sahitya Academi Award in 2013 for her short story collection *Labumum for my head*. It is about human condition which illustrates various facet of normal men and women’s life.

Aruni Kashyap is a poet and an Editor of the research journal, *Yaatra*. Most of his works mostly published in journal and magazines. He has been awarded the Charles Wallace India Trust Scholarship. His works reveal the violence in North-East. He is the English translator of the novel *The Bronze Sword of Tengphakhri Tehsildar*, originally written in Assamese by Indira Goswami. His first novel, *The House with a Thousand Stories* in 2013. Along with fiction, he writes extensively on socio-political issues and his opinion based articles have appeared in *The Guardian, UK, Open Democracy* and *Tehelka*.

Dhruba Hazarika is another Assamese writer who writes in English. He is the author of *A Bow String Winter* which has received critical acclaim for its fascinating narrative and its ability to coalesce different genres such as thriller, mystery, romance, drama and travelogue. His latest book *Luck* is a collection of short stories. He has won the Katha Award for Creative Writing in English in 1996. He is the founder of the North-East Writers Forum.

By and large, the women writing is based on villages and large cities. Mitra Phukan, Temsula Ao, Mamang Dai, Jahnavi Barua, Anjum Hasan, and Indira Goswami are few of the women writers from North-East India. They have succeeded in their attempts of bridging North-East India with the rest of the India through their writing. Their works delineate the places from where they come.

Mitra Phukan is a writer who writes in English. She is an Assamese by birth. She is also a translator and columnist. She is the author of *The Collector's Wife* (2005). It is a novel set against the Assam Agitation of the 1970s and 80s. *The Collector's Wife* is one of the first generation novels in English written by an Assamese writer to be published by an international house. She is one of the most prominent literary voices in English from North-East India. She has written several books for children, and won the UNICEF-CBT award for children's writing for her book *Mamoni's Adventure* (1986). She regularly contributes to *The Assam Tribune*, and is a prominent member of the North-East Writers' Forum.

Mamong Dai is a writer, hailing from Itanagar. She has written extensively about the culture and history of Arunachal Pradesh. Her first collection of poetry *River Poems* introduced by Keki Daruwalla established her as a major voice in Indian English Literature in general, and Literature from North-East India in particular. She is also the author of *Arunachal Pradesh: The*

Hidden Land. She is a member of the North-East Writer's Forum, and has to her credit a number of published short stories and poems. She has also to her credit, two children's books, *Once Upon a Moontime* and *The Sky Queen*.

Jahnavi Barua is a writer and her works are set in Bangalore. Her first novel is *Next Door* and second one is *Rebirth*. Her former novel also has been shortlisted for the Man Asian literary Prize 2011 and it critically acclaimed collection of short stories set in Assam with insurgency as the background. Her second novel is based on the relationship between parents and children. It also explores the state of arranged marriage, family relationships, and friends. She also got the Commonwealth Book Prize in 2012,

Indira Goswami is a well-received name in North-East writing. She has been a prolific writer and renowned activist. She has been the winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1983, the Jnanpith Award in 2001 and Principal Prince Claus Laureate in 2008. Many of her works have been translated into English from her native Assamese which include *The Moth Eaten Howdah of the Tusker*, *Pages Stained With Blood*, and *The Man from Chinnamasta*. Her contribution in the Assamese feminist literature is self-evident in this work and her works focus on women and the cultural and political construct of the Assamese society.

The genre of the novel has for long been considered as a medium for conveying thoughts, feelings and experiences. Generally, the events are narrated in a chronological order and the characters are delineated from the outside. The endeavour has all along been first to rouse the curiosity of the reader and then to make him ask for more. Generally, the tenor is 'what happened next?', though true happenings and real characters are considered to be the right stuff

for fictional writings. Many a time the reader has to go through the process of ‘the willing suspension of disbelief’.

Delineation of an individual character, the depiction of domestic life and the presentation of the social scenario have been till recently, the main stages in the development of the novel.

According to Srinivasa Iyengar:

The ‘novel’ as a literary phenomenon is new to India. Epics, lyrics, dramas, short stories and fables have their respectable ancestries, going back by several centuries, but it is only during a period of little more than a century that the novel – the long sustained piece of prose fiction - has occurred and taken root in India. . . . Novels have been, and are being published in a dozen Indian languages, and also in English. (314)

Anjum Hasan is one such North-East Indian Woman writer representing Indian Writing in English and Regional fiction. She is a laudable writer with inexhaustible vision. She is a burgeoning novelist and poet with unsullied imagination and traditional methods of writing. Her writing carries pictures, feelings, ideas, questions, and counter thoughts. This seems familiar, yet fresh. Anjum Hasan is a novelist and a poet. She was born in 1972 in Shillong, Meghalaya. She studied Philosophy at the North-Eastern Hill University. She migrated to Bangalore at the age of 26. This move as well as the contrast between life in a small Indian town and in a big city, proved to have a great influence on her literary work. At present, she lives in Bangalore.

Although, Anjum Hasan migrated to Bangalore in her twenties, the influence of Shillong is all pervasive in her writing. Evidently, Shillong is her Muse which inspires her imagination. It is not merely a town from Meghalaya, but a representation of a certain collective individuals who

live little differently. She has set her poems in Shillong, her novel *Lunatic in My Head* in Shillong and a part of *Neti, Neti* in Shillong.

Anjum Hasan's debut work is a poem collection, *Street on the Hill*. Her poems sensitively probe bourgeois life in a small Indian town. It has allusions to her childhood memories and secrets. Typically, her work reflects her own life. Anjum Hasan is cited in anthology and post-colonial Indian writers in English along with Arundhai Subramaniam, Ranjit Hoskote, Masud Taj etc. She has been given the Sahitya Academi Award in 2006 for *Street on the Hill* which is a collection of poems. She writes in free verse, a genre of poetry now getting hold of much reputation among young Indian poets. The sense of place and belonging is clearly obvious together with the setting and recreation that the poems seem to craft.

Anjum Hasan's collection of poems, *Street on the Hill* brings forth the splendour of Shillong and its inhabitants. This collection is divided into five sections. Each section signifies a theme. The small town of Shillong depicted in this collection appears to be a confined place which limits people's dreams and aspirations through societal codes of conventions and prescriptive normative ways of behavior. A few poems suggest that one's obscurity can offer freedom from expectations, judgements, and set codes of 006 Normative social behaviors.

Anjum Hasan's poems, in which people seem to be longing for the bigger worlds of the cities, suggest that a small town may confine one more than a big city which offers the possibility of liberation through anonymity. In this, she seems to be contradicting Bachelard's view that only open landscapes can act as spaces of release. In all, this collection is a potpourri of emotions clearly expressed. A set of poems written over a period of 10 years, is a beautiful demonstration that is rationally stimulating, precisely vigilant and texturally distinguished.

In 2006, Anjum Hasan published her first novel *Lunatic in My Head*, which made it on to the shortlist of one of India's most prestigious literary prizes, the Crossword Award. The novel is set in Shillong in the 1990s. It is once again a poetic and humorous portrait of a small town which is undergoing great changes, as well as of three of the townspeople trying to break away from their small town fate. Her novel begins on a typically overcast Shillong afternoon with a middle-aged schoolteacher named Firdaus Ansari walking along a wet street.

Pine trees seem to drip slow tears, film posters turn to mush; a little later in this opening chapter, a precocious eight-year-old Sophie Das, 'stares past her own weeping reflection' in a window pane. Such imagery recurs through this book, which is a portrait of life in a North-East city as seen through three characters of different ages, all moulded in different ways by their setting. In the meantime, Aman Moondy, a young dreamer obsessed with the early Pink Floyd, is studying for the Civil Services exam for a second time and waiting with his small group of friends.

In her second novel *Neti, Neti* (2009), Anjum Hasan examines her own move away from a small town. The novel shows the fate of a young woman in an Indian metropolis: the 25-year-old Sophie moves from Shillong to Bangalore in search of freedom, but after a while she feels increasingly alienated in the money-driven city. *Neti, Neti* has been on the longlist for the Man Asia Literary Prize. It is a sequel to her first novel *Lunatic in My Head*. The character of Sophie Das reappears with few other characters from *Lunatic in My Head*. Her family and friends from Shillong emerge either directly or indirectly in the narration. She has grown into a young woman of twenty-five and the seventeen years lurk round the corner of the narration. Similar to Sophie, the town of Shillong has also resurfaced in *Neti, Neti* and it has grown up by seventeen years as well.

Similar to *Lunatic in My Head* which was a story of a town, *Neti, Neti* is an account of the city, Bangalore. It is one of the protagonists which are more or less, omnipresent in the novel. Sophie's life is an indirect description of the people's life in Bangalore. The qualities like snobbishness, pomposity, Westernisation, boisterousness, and few others are implicitly interwoven.

Anjum Hasan has published her most recent work *Difficult Pleasures* in 2012. It narrates tales of individuals who yearn to escape into the void and few who desire to belong somewhere. It is an album containing lives and each life standing, symbolizing something. There is a solitary economist who drives from France to Sweden to try and redeem a tragedy. There is a boy who fervently hopes that his father will not miss his appearance in a school play. There is a painter who is on the way to Europe is about to board the wrong flight. Another narrative about a village boy who leaves school for the bright lights of Bangalore. Anjum Hasan also narrates about a man who tries to stop time. Anjum Hasan in *The Hindu* February 12, 2013 says about her latest work:

Difficult Pleasures was an experiment to see what I could do with the images that come to me of people's lives, strangers' lives. One of the things I realised while writing these stories was how our day-to-day lives are increasingly set in a mould that makes us feel like we know each other or that there is nothing to know because everything is touched with the same banality. Yet to me the interior life is always unique, strange, disturbing and yet familiar. These stories allowed me to explore different kinds of inner lives and the several ways of expressing them. And many of my readers seem to have understood that project.

Anjum Hasan has also published short prose texts, poetry, travel writing and literary essays in Indian and international periodicals, and she also works as an editor for *The Caravan Magazine*. Her poems and short stories have been included in many important anthologies of Indian poetry and short fiction. Her academic excellence and creative imagination supplement credit to the journals and periodicals she is associated with it. Several of her short poems keep appearing in well-recognised magazines and newspapers. Anjum Hasan in an article, “Versatility” quotes one of her poems, in the poem ‘Solitude’:

‘I have a house where I go
When there’s too many people,
I have a house Where I go,
Where no one can be; I have a house where I go,
Where nobody ever says ‘No’
Where no one says anything – so
There is no one but me’ ” (118)

One of the important characteristics of her works is the setting which is real and barely fictional. Right from her first work *Street on the Hill*, Anjum Hasan has rendered significance to the location. Her novels concentrate on places and the people living in it. She attaches significance to geography of a place; it may be a room or a city. She is also very careful in describing the minutest of minute details of places irrespective of its size.

Relationship between a place and a person is scrupulously examined in all her works. One gets a sense of the space; the people in the place and the relationship of belonging. These places are all in existence and can be seen as - sweet shops, sports goods stores, beauty parlours,

Chinese restaurants, hotel bedrooms are the remembered places which seem to stir up into poetic creativity. *The Hindu* Sep 3, 2006 portrays In the poem titled "Afternoon in the Beauty Parlour", Hasan writes: "A good place to grow old in: "the radio crackling in the corner, / the whores coming in with red nails / on Saturday morning"

Shillong lies between the lines of *Street on the Hill*, *Lunatic in My Head* and *Neti, Neti*. Geographically, it might be located in Meghalaya, yet textually and fictionally it is found in Anjum Hasan's Works. Shillong occupies a prominent place in all her literary works. The pulsating lives of people are skillfully arrested in the narratives. Anjum Hasan in her poem, "My Folks," published in *The Hindu* Sep 03, 2006 portrays the life and soul of Shillong:

We have hills in our blood
but end up smelling fat cars on city streets
and garbage strewn under rain.
We speak in stories:
raconteurs, mimics, chroniclers all,

There are also other places and cities which fascinate her. She has written about the metropolis of Delhi, Calcutta, and Mumbai. She in one of her articles titled, "Paradise of Rectitude" observes, "Delhi seems immune to these developments" and "Delhi's luxury-loving and loose-living Mirzas" (94). Further, reviewing *Last Man in Tower* in an article titled, "Civilisation of Luggage," she comments, "Aravind Adiga's new novel is set in exactly the kind of middle-class hell that one might turn to novels escape." (86).

Characterisation is where Anjum Hasan's forte lies besides the setting. She paints vivid and in-depth characters in her works. She is highly capable of depicting from simple to complex

characters. On one hand, she sketches the character of a maid servant who is a rumour monger and on the other hand, with the same ease she depicts the extremely complex character of Maya in *Neti, Neti*. She covers a large range of characters, from a baby, School girl, college student to an elderly couple and a spiritual Guru.

There are memorable characters besides the protagonist who leave an indelible impression on the readers. These characters occupy very little space in the narration but complement it considerably. Jason, Kong Bina, Kong Elsa, Mrs Das and Miss Wilson are few such characters from *Lunatic in My Head*. Similarly, Uncle Rock, Mamamiya, Mr Bhatt, Mr Chinnappa are vibrant characters who cut impressive figures from *Neti, Neti*.

Anjum Hasan has brilliant linguistic style in her works. She uses such a conversational language. When the characters speak to one another, it feels like listening to a play. Few words even become cliches and maxims. Mrs Das's words 'you are sadly mistaken' echoes throughout the narrative of *Lunatic in My Head* and it keeps resonating in reader's mind even after completing the read. Likewise, she is very conscious of using language and cultural appropriately. She makes distinction between 'Samoa' and 'Singada' in order to distinguish from North-East to rest of India.

Bangalorean language deserves special mentioning as she has made an effort to distinguish between English of a local person from Bangalore and IT professional. She has triumphantly brought in the dialect of English which the Bangalore IT employees use. It is heavily Americanised and surcharged with slang. Likewise, the word 'da' suggesting endearment is also palpable. Swami uses 'da' when talking to Sophie. It is commendable how Anjum Hasan code switches her narrative with ease and expertise.

Thematically exploring, Anjum Hasan interweaves numerous themes in her works. The underlying and major themes are – human relationships, disillusionment, boredom, change, alienation, nature and socio-cultural practices. She puts forth the theme of alienation which is related to sense of belonging. Mostly, she alludes to sense of belonging to a place than to a person. However, there are instances and ideas which exclusively contemplate on the relationship between individuals.

Besides accolades and prizes, Anjum Hasan has won attention of many scholars and critics. Her work is praised and scrutinized closely by many. Many have passed their comments and observation on her debut piece of writing. Arundhati Subramaniam in *Where I Live* observes, “a clutch of lovely childhood poems and some memorable ones about Bombay, where she lives” (202-203).

The novels, *Lunatic in My Head* and *Neti, Neti* have claimed similar notice and eulogies. Namita Bhandare in the article, “Local, yet Global,” observes, “*Lunatic in My Head*, a remarkable novel with intensely lyrical quality” (185). There have been ample of reviews on her first novel. Akshaya Saxena in one of such reviews titled “Floyd in Shillong” notes, “Anjum Hasan’s *Lunatic in My Head* colours in Shillong a rainy blue, which for now is a stand-in for the gloriously homogenized North East, the hitherto unacknowledged white space on the Indian literary map” (33).

Anjum Hasan’s style as a writer has attained remarkable heights. Her choice of words, simple language, and poetic diction inspire reading. Nasima Aziz in her article, “Pushing the Licence” says, “Anjum’s style of communicating – using familiar words in unfamiliar settings –

conveys between-the-lines nuances and multi-levels of meaning – a thoroughly enjoyable and satisfying experience for the reader” (162).

In recent times, everyone feels as William Wordsworth observes, in his poems “The World is Too Much with Us.” The buzzwords like ‘globalisation,’ ‘urbanisation,’ ‘developmental encroachments,’ and ‘coca-colisation’ reverberate ubiquitously creating a bang. These words when put to function appear to reshape human identities. A place seems to change its place and position in this fast moving and so-called ‘advancing’ world.

There is an invisible, yet invincible relationship between place and the people who live inside it. In fact, there is an interplay between a habitat and its inhabitant. To be specific, a place describes the identity of the people who live in it and similarly, the occupants who live in a place identify it. There are few writers who write about region specific and Anjum Hasan is one such writer who is rendering an opportunity to explore and tour around few places.

The present study titled, “From One-horse Town to Metropolis: a Study of Persons and Places in Select Novels of Anjum Hasan,” makes a modest attempt to excavate the setting, Shillong and Bangalore in *Lunatic in My Head* and *Neti, Neti* respectively. It explores the small town of Shillong and metropolis of Bangalore in relation to the lives of individuals living in these. It delves into the everyday life of individuals and assesses the individuality of the cities in which they inhabit.

The present study is divided into four chapters along with the bibliography at the end. The first chapter titled, “Introduction” presents forth a brief survey of women Indian writing in English and North-East Indian writing in order to establish Anjum Hasan as a North-East Indian

Women writers in English. It acquaints with the writer Anjum Hasan and her works. It furnishes the thesis statement elucidating the contemporary relevance of the research idea.

The second chapter titled, “Shillong” delineates the small town of Shillong as implicated in Anjum Hasan’s *Lunatic in My head*. It encapsulates several aspects like education in Shillong, music, and socio-cultural habits of its inhabitants. The third chapter titled, “Bangalore” portrays the metropolis of Bangalore as depicted in *Neti, Neti*. The chapter envelopes various aspects of the city like shopping malls, Americanised lifestyle, traffic, and attitude of individuals. The fourth chapter titled, “Conclusion” contemplates on the analysis from previous chapters and consolidates the findings.

CHAPTER II

CHAPTER II

SHILLONG

India is a land of diversity and divergent panoramas. Shillong is one important place which contributes to this miscellany. It is historically and geographically an important part of India. It lies huddled in the North-Eastern part alluring tourists. Historically, it still carries the residue of British colonisation in its culture and architecture.

Shillong is one of the most prominent cities in India. It has fine-looking lakes and falls and is placed in the middle of green peak and pine jungle. This hill station presents unsoiled, peaceful, fresh and free environment to the people. The romantic city of Shillong is one of the important places to the North-East people. Meghalaya is one of the North-Eastern states in India and its capital is Shillong. According to the 2011 statistics, the population is 1,43,007. The city accommodates rolling hills which reminded the Europeans of Scotland. It is an abode for Khasi people and Khasi Hills.

Shillong gained popularity as it was made the civil station of Khasi and Jaintia Hills by Britishers in 1864. Later in 1874, it was made the head quarters of Chief Commissioners Province due to its favourable cool climate and appropriate location between Brahmaputra and Surma Valleys. In addition to this, it remained the capital of undivided Assam till 1972. In 1881, Shillong has steadily has grown over space taking within it the divergent areas.

Today, Shillong urban agglomeration consists of the Shillong town, the cantonment and five townships of Nongthymmai, Mawlai, Pynthorumkhrah, Madanrting and Nongmynsong are following total inhabitants of on three lakes.

Shillong is connected to other parts of Meghalaya and India by road system. It is the city of urban population of both males and females. Females constitute the larger by 54%, whereas, males represent the lesser by 46%. Similarly, the literacy rate of females is greater than that of males. The demographics of Shillong is – Hindus 10%, Muslims 7%, Christians 60%, and other are 23% and also Sikhs 0.2%, Buddhists 0.2%.

The Khasis form the majority of city's population; however, the proportion is deteriorating on account of migration of others. For instance, Bengali, Nepali, Assamese, Bihar and Marwaris are making the city urbane. Christianity is the prevailing religious conviction in the city. The population of Christianity is Presbyterianism and previous denominates of Protestants and Roman Catholics. In the heart of the city, stands a gorgeous cathedral of Roman Catholics church. Nonetheless, there are many of them pursuing the original Khasi religion like Niam Khasi and Niamtre.

The education system of Shillong is significant in India. There are several important educational institutions like Indian Institute of Management which promote edification. The city is not only noteworthy place for Education, but also there are many theatres, newspapers, magazines, and local radio and television stations. There are number of newspapers in both Khasi and English like *Shillong Times*, *Meghalaya Guardian*, *Highland Post* and *Meghalaya Times*.

The Garo Hills constitute a vital landmark of Shillong. The Garo Hills is mostly populated by the Garos, belonging to the Bodo family of the Tibeto-Burman race, said to have wandered from Tibet. The Garos favour to identify themselves as Achiks and the land they occupy as the Achik-land.

Khasi is native tribe in Shillong. Mr. Khongphai a senior advocate from Shillong has described “a Khasi as a person born of a Khasi mother” (Nongsiej 12). There are expert opinions on Khasi clan. Another famous writer Dr. Bareh has defined ‘Kha’ which means ‘born of’ and ‘Si’ which refers to an ‘ancient mother’. The name ‘Khasi’ is derived and developed indigenously from the Khasi word ‘sla tyrpad’ and ‘Lasi’ bay leaf of which a Greek man called it ‘Kasi’ while an English man called the same ‘Cassia’, is the Greek historian Ptolemy. A ‘Lasi’, or a ‘Kasi’ or a ‘Cassia’ is refined as crude oil in the ancient world. A Khasi is a Khasi and no other tribe’s man as a symbol of a religious worship.

Anjum Hasan finds it challenging to bring in the city of heterogeneous cultural background in a novel like *Lunatic in My Head*. Shillong’s multicultural milieu poses supplementary meticulous exertion. She enables a literary experience of a place like Shillong and the landscape and weather through her writings. It is one of the finest portrayals of Shillong rendered through fictional lives and episodes.

Anjum Hasan’s literary works are extensively set in Shillong. In essence, *Lunatic in My Head* delineates the socio-cultural lifestyle of middle-class individuals. Following the same line, her poetry collection *Street on the Hills* symbolizes Anjum Hasan’s formative year’s interpretation, reminiscences and secrets. Shillong from her past life resonates thus – *Time of My Childhood, Families, Small Town, Where I Now Live, and A Place Like Water*. Anjum Hasan has been very well familiar with Shillong as she grew up, among its inhabitants and listening to different languages, Khasi and Assamese.

The novel, *Lunatic in My Head* is to a degree autobiographical. It represents Anjum Hasan’s life in Shillong. Sophie’s life at school bare resemblance with that of the writer. This

segment of novel reminisces her adolescent phase. Further, Das's parents share similitude with Anjum Hasan's parents – father was an unsuccessful lecturer who quit his job at a point of time and mother was a private tutor of history. Similarly, the fictional character of Firdaus throws some insight into the writer's life during her higher education. The college setting bares strong likeness to her real life academia.

The character of Sophie delineates the freedom which Anjum Hasan enjoyed as a small girl. Further, Sophie's younger baby sister represents Daisy Hasan, Anjum Hasan's younger sister in real life. Daisy Hasan is a writer like her elder sister, however, Anjum Hasan points out, Daisy Hasan's style is eccentricity, and completely dissimilar from her. The novel is primarily based on things that she has gone through in her growing up years. However, she also tried reliving the tension of the times that has stayed on with her by talking about the emotions that led to it.

Firdaus Ansari, Aman Moondy, and Sophie Das are the three protagonists who represent three aspects of Anjum Hasan's life and more than that, a holistic vista of Shillong. They represent dreamers who dream beyond geographical and physical limits. These characters are 'title characters' justifying the title of the novel *Lunatic in My Head*. In a way, they are lunatic as their unfulfilled dreams show symptoms of lunacy. These day-dreamers appear to be unhappy with their present lives and desire for an ultra change.

Firdaus Ansari is a keen observer studying people and her ambience. The Small Town Shillong conveys the surroundings – the small shops and Laitumkhrah's wet street to some extent turned to soft mass. The roads are buzzing with activities. There is one which is occupied

with beauty parlour, restaurant and “She often walked this street on her way to college and never took any notice of these things. She looked at people, however, and people looked at her” (4).

The novel *Lunatic in My Head* opens with a vivacious description of the setting. It is an afternoon and in the month of April. It is a normal day. The portrayal is graphical with list of landmarks. In particular, it describes a street in Shillong which is dotted with hue of nature and consumerism. One of the human protagonists, Firdaus is introduced along the locale:

Two o'clock on an April afternoon the colour of dusk. Pine trees dripped slow tears, windows lit up in classrooms and banks, film posters pasted on the stony embankments of Laitumkhrah's wet streets slowly turned to mush. Firdaus Ansari walked past the Chic Choice beauty parlour, a dimly lit Chinese restaurant, a bookshop with the examination guides and primers in its window bleached golden white. (3)

Shillong is a serene, tranquil, and at the same time an eventful place. Basically, it is an assortment of hills, gardens, streets, and small shops. More or less, it is flanked between green foliage and flora. There are seldom occasions for boom and hustle and bustle. There is mention of a music festival in the novel which is considered as a great happening. Besides, there are no feuds except for inconspicuous street fights.

Music defines the lifestyle of people in general. Youngsters in Shillong find Western music more appealing and attractive. Music is of multiple kinds. Some like classic and some believe that Western music is superior. They try to extract some kind of strength from it. Aman and his friends discuss music with genuine vigour. They form a club to treat their life with music:

Some of them had just formed a band called The ProtoDreamers; they would play Pink Floyd covers at concerts and in private. When the tape played itself out, Aman replaced it with the real *Dark Side of the Moon*. He'd been listening to the album for the last five years and its significance kept changing as his life changed. Once it was just good music - everyone was into it. He'd heard it the way he would hear Led Zeppelin or Deep Purple. Now, Aman would consider such an attitude blasphemous. Floyd was to other bands what angels are to mortals - possessed of the same features superficially, but actually inhabiting a different sphere altogether. (14-15)

People seem to have a taste for Western music in general, and Rock in particular. There are individuals for who music is the staple entertainment. Aman and his friends irrespective of their ethnic and academic background have passion for Western music. They are ardent enthusiasts of Pink Floyd and all kind of English pop music. They discuss music as having discourse on politics or religion.

Anjum Hasan has devoted a considerable portion of narrative on Western music. The characters like Aman, Ribor, Ibomcha, Jason, Mr Das, David Rockwell, Bodha Chatterjee, and few others savour Western music and represent Shillong which is engrossed in music culture. Aman expresses, "I like rock music also. Elvis, Beatles. Ah, I listen to everything. I play the guitar also" (127). There is an episode whirling around a music concert which highlights their fanaticism. It brings forth other aspects of life, love, anger, material needs, and relationships.

Pink Floyd plays an important role in *Lunatic in My Head*. Aman likes music well. He cannot compromise when it comes to it. He would hear it the way he would hear "Led Zeppelin

or Deep Purple” (15). Aman says that “I’m more interested in the Pink Floyd ones. Their music was more operatic and whimsical than what the Americans were doing with psychedelia” (77).

Adulation of English music is another aspect of Shillong which shows the degree of its colonised mindset. Its influence is paramount on its inhabitants. People quarrel over it and for it. They commercialise it and fantasise it. Aman worships Pink Floyd as a demigod. He sends letters sending his regards and conveying suggestions. He seems to open up in his letters:

Aman wrote to Pink Floyd now and then, asking them about how Syd Barrett-the mad and dysfunctional ex-member of the band - was doing, giving them his views on how their albums compared with one another, and sending them accounts of what he believed were Floyd-like dreams where detailed narratives involving Sherlock Holmes, nuclear reactors and beautiful, unsuspecting girls were set against a pastoral English backdrop. Aman was trying to perfect a style that would capture his surreal dreams, dreams so surreal he was convinced that the enlightened members of Pink Floyd would find their own music reflected in them. (18-19)

Shillong gets its music and dance culture from a strong Christian missionary movement and a subsequent natural resemblance to western cultural traditions. Shillong's rockers simply cannot think of making a living off music. Despite the fact that there is a blossoming rock music scene in India's main cities, record companies believe the music does not sell. Aman believes that Pink Floyd should happen in Shillong. Aman says “And I think William Burroughs was experimenting with light shows and stuff. But I’m more interested in the Pink Floyd ones. Their music was more operatic and whimsical than what the Americans were doing with psychedelia.

Give me Pink Floyd over Jefferson Airplane any day” (77). Concerts are an important aspect promoting music in the city. Aman and his friends organise for a big musical event and try to involve every one.

Art and literature constitutes an important fibre of Shillong’s lifestyle. And in the end, it is only music and literature that give the community of ‘dkhars’, they could talk and think music together, and movements like these bound them up. The physical beauty is a representing feature of Shillong women. For instance, Aman’s dream girl, Concordella who fascinates him, “Aman was fascinated by her - the softly curling brown hair just brushing her shoulder, the eyelashes, the mouth, the mole on the chin, the painful beauty” (137). He dotted upon her. Most of them are very beautiful like Concordella, Mrs Das, Sophie’s school friend Ibahun and Kong Elsa and her relatives. The charming aspect of physical appearance is attributed to royalty. Nevertheless, according to Sophie’s view, beauty makes no distinction between two categories-royals and no royals as she wishes the normal beauty like her.

Literature like music influences and inspires imaginary populous of Shillong. Firdaus represent the literature fanatics along with Mr Das who identify themselves with classics and evergreens. Firdaus liked the particular character in *Persuasion* and *Pride and Prejudice*. She identifies with the lead character in *Persuasion*, Anne, felt that “one half of her should not be always so much wiser than the other half, or always suspecting the other half of being worse than it was” (10).

Firdaus is attached with books, “English and American novels or random essays by writers like Hillaire Belloc and Charles Lamb” (5). The books have important views sentence by sentence, word by word and have more information. She seems to ponder over the strength of

Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea*, “the fishing line going out slowly or fast, the fisherman holding it with his left hand or his right” (4-5).

Firdaus identifies herself with her favourite heroines. Although in *Persuasion*, Anne seeks love, she is conscious of her duty to her place and the caution of making a suitable match. “Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* could be enviably clear without being infallibly right” (Hasan 10). Through these individual characters she is able to understand her life. Though she would be mistaken about Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, there was something equal in their affiliation as she had insufferable him very much and then when the air was blank, fallen in love with him with consequent passion.

Education is another characteristic of Shillong’s populace. All the three protagonists, Aman, Firdaus, and Sophie are either student or educator connected with education. In fact, it is the nucleus around which every one’s lives revolve. Sophie is at school and finds another school at home where her parents are inborn teachers. She is allowed physical exercise which is another kind of education and no television, “No, child. TV is for the brainless. Duds. People who watch TV are duds” (47). Mr Das desires Sophie to be a good student at all the subjects and dreams of a hopeful future for her.

Ibomcha is an education enthusiast figure representing the educational value of Shillong. He holds education in high esteem. Ibomcha, over and over again says, “Education’s not good in Manipur” (62). He believes that Shillong has better quality of education culture. He is a mentor to many Manipuri students who aspire for higher education or jobs. Children from affluent families are sent to Ibomcha for educational grooming. Even his relatives send their children to him for better education and coaching. He handled it all for them “coaching the boys how to

speak at the interview, finding them housing, taking them to Lila Brothers to get their uniforms stitched, negotiating the donations to school principals who made no bones about wanting money in exchange for an admission” (62). He prepares them to perform well in interviews and exams. He is also philanthropic when it comes to provide children with books and study materials.

North-East region gives more importance for Education. Education urbanises the inhabitants. Especially, Shillong have many fancy doctors like heart specialists and surgeons, the dentists and physiotherapists including Dr Moondy. Aman knows the amount of esteem in which he will be held if he qualifies IAS, hence he strives to be successful. Education reassures and comforts the people. They become positive and look forward to superior tradition out of it. Firdaus is a college lecturer who struggles to complete her MPhil thesis and Sophie studies in a convent school in Shillong.

Sumana Roy’s article, “The Legitimacy of Failure”, Coetzee observes, in his essay ‘What is a Classic?’ Coetzee writes:

To such young people, the high culture of the metropolis may arrive in the form of powerful experiences which cannot, however, be embedded in their lives in any obvious way, and which seem therefore to have their existence in some transcendent realm. In extreme cases, they are led to blame their environment for not living up to art and to take up residence in an art-world. This is a provincial fate . . . (36)

The significant of reading a ‘foreign’ language is obvious in a provincial town like Shillong. The knowledge comes from ‘outside’ as a nature of education. For instance, Firdaus dreams of ‘sea’, which she has not seen before. However, she vividly imagines as she teaches

The Old Man and the Sea in her class. This can be compared to William Wordsworth's 'Daffodils', the poet has not seen the flower of Daffodil, nevertheless, he visualises these beautiful flowers in his mind's eye, he wandered lonely as a cloud. This is related to all the protagonists. It describes about isolation which evokes more imagination on something else that is longed for and is absent from life. In the same vein, Firdaus's lonesomeness makes her review more on her future and longing for Shillong.

Aman is douse with ambitions and dreams of his parents. He is an IAS aspirant and though his heart is set in many others, particularly music. However, he does not give up on his principal objective and tries. His thoughts about Pink Floyd and they "never speak directly about romance in their songs" (126). He also concentrates on BA in Philosophy, such ambitions of Aman provide him a new way of life, "a profession that was unfamiliar enough to seem attractive and sought-after enough to seem respectable" (15).

Modernity in relationship between man and woman is clearly palpable. However, it is not that conservative values in marriage are lost. Firdaus is into an open relationship with Ibomcha. Mrs Das and Mr Das, despite of their differences try to live together. At a point of their relationship, they try to go separate ways but are together for their daughters. Nivedita, Firdaus's colleague undergoes an ordeal as her husband is into an extramarital relationship. Jason also seems to have amorous interactions with female friends.

The institution of marriage receives some consideration in *Lunatic in My Head*. Firdaus, her colleague Sharon, and the Chinese shop girl are all unmarried. The idea of Marriage is a significant object for contemplation for Firdaus minds, "Something along the lines of how marriage is a moral testing ground in Austen's novels" (9). Austen has a special place for

marriage and relationships in her novels, disregard of the fact that she was never married.

Firdaus is in her thirties and not married, however, studying the pattern of marriage, “Every year one, maybe two of her students faded out of the English class” (58).

Firdaus Ansari represents an empowered and open-minded woman. She is audacious, aspiring, and liberal. Her boyfriend, Ibomcha is younger to her as being Manipuri poses challenges of inter-religion and different languages. Firdaus’s grandfather, a respectable man in his community is unable to accept his granddaughter going astray. Somehow, her steely determination and unconventional approach seems to bring her a wedding. She articulates, “I don’t know what’s in my blood. It’s not what the Maulvi said in the mosque when I was a child. It’s not Hemingway. It’s not the language my grandfather speaks. It’s not the books my father left behind. It’s not the hymns they sing in the college assembly. So what is it then?” (123). However, she feels, “Blood is a mixed up thing. Religion is not just what you eat, what your books say” (123).

Lunatic in My Head catalogues the most important things about the place and people how “the languages they spoke, their social position, how long they had lived in Shillong” (3). The language of the people is a blend of British, quite Assamese, and half Khasi. There are people who have come across the border from Nepal and settled in Shillong. However, Firdaus was not any of these as “She refused to introduce herself as a Bihari because though her parents were from Bihar, she was born in Shillong and had never lived anywhere else” (4).

Anjum Hasan has taken into account of North-East language and culture of Shillong. *Lunatic in My Head* emphasizes on English language. English is a component of people’s culture in Shillong. Firdaus is an English lecturer and Mr Das as “He was one of the most distinguished

teachers of English literature in Shillong” (24). English is associated with Irish nuns in school; Miss Wilson’s language of English is in her blood. It instilled a love of writing like “Sophie should improve her English; she was a careless child” (24).

Lunatic in My Head brings out the Anglo-Indian characteristic of Shillong. For instance, Sophie's teacher Miss Wilson who is Anglo-Indian, uses all Native language seasoned with English. In the same way, Firdaus’s colleagues, faculty of English department, address each as ‘Miss’ which is “their association with a convent endowed them all with the aura of virginity” (6) and which is again a Victorian English practice.

Anjum Hasan provides a subtle allusion to the dressing culture of people in Shillong. Evidently, men wear bright colour shirts, pants and shoes and there is shop display of the same. The Khasi people wear full dress with covering heads along with and bags. Moreover, Shillong is regarded as the ‘fashion capital’ of India because the place holds different kinds of tasteful clothes. The clothes involve shirts, jeans, coats etc. The Skinniness and narrowed jeans with discuss sneakers is one of the most general highlights in Shillong. Though it seems like it is used less by men and more by women.

The tradition of Khasi wedding dress and their costumes are very different as the Khasi bride dress, “dark suits with white posies in their button holes” (95). Other Khasi males dress is sleeveless coat which is like garment. Khasi women was” grey-haired, powder white, and dressed always in floral skirts and red lipstick” (21). The young girls dress in converse, skinnies, and ugg. Big warm plaid shawls and Khasi bags on both young people and poor people is a dressing trademark. However, there is no sari and no Kurta-Pajamas in the weddings. Old-fashioned dresses are worn by Khasi ladies of farming community.

Khasi people's wedding dress is very chic like Kong Elsa's dress, "silk, polished golden silk with tassels at the hem" (94). She wears her earrings which are two dangling chains of dull gold that shining colour like strawberry jelly. Sophie makes more observations. All the old women and younger women sport, "silken jainsems and tartan shawls" (95).

The Khasi men are some hard drinkers and consume large quantities of spirit distilled from rice or millet. Rice beer is also manufactured in Shillong this used not only as a beverage, but also for ceremonial purposes. Liquor is manufactured and consumed, "the liquor store was Goan and, since there were very few Goans in Shillong" (3). A man like Jason drinks more beer and he asks Sophie to taste the beer, "fizzier and more bitter. It tasted horrible" (235). Mr Das has a good family and that is why he tries to hide his smoking and drinking beer and avoid fight with his wife.

There are fruits and vegetables which also represent the place. In Shillong, Kwai fruit is available in abundance. It has colour like orange fruit and it was mostly used by the locals. One can distinguish the addicts of this fruit by the colour of their lips. There are characters in the novel who find it irresistible like Kong Bina. Sophie also likes Kwai fruit, however, she develops some inhibitions, "Sophie knew from past experience that she ought to refuse, that Kwai spelt doom" (42).

Migration from one place to another place is a phenomenon from time immemorial. People move looking out for opportunities and better life. Dr Moondy, Aman's father is a simple-minded MBBS who has migrated from Calcutta to Shillong as he is tired of the life in capital. He is content, as he finds his patients simple-natured. However, he contradicts his own idea at a later point of time when he says that "Shillong has no future. In my time, things were

different. One could make a life here. There were opportunities. People were open-minded . . . That time has gone. Now, people, boys, you know, boys half your height, barge into people's shops, into offices, and demand money!" (70).

Shillong is a microscopic representation of multicultural and multi-ethnic macrocosm. It renders refuge to everyone who comes seeking for it. Moreover, they all blend in together well. Firdaus is able to make out the distinction from one another as she knows them by their faces and by their occupation. She wonders at the diversity of her neighbours and every one residing in Shillong:

A mere glance was usually enough to reveal the important things about them - the languages they spoke, their social position, how long they had lived in Shillong. Firdaus knew that the woman waving to her from the window of the beauty parlour, her friend Sharon, was a quarter-British, a quarter-Assamese of the tea-planter variety, and half-Khasi. She knew that the college boys whistling raucously from across the street were entirely Khasi; that the short, scruffy men from the restaurants, out shopping for vegetables and chicken to put in the evening's noodles, were from distant Nepal but had probably never stirred out of Shillong since their parents migrated here; that the two men with long black umbrellas and jholas, out to fetch their children from school, were Bengalis who were born here; (3)

Shillong is always neither rainy nor cold. The splendour of place is immeasurable. It is moist and pleasantly cold. It receives unrelenting rains. The inhabitants despite languid weather are enthusiastic and energetic. Somehow, it is little dreary and gloomy which elevate the

loneliness of people. The laziness of the people's mind going on day dreams. For instance, Firdaus stands in her window when she feels lonely. The rainy occasion makes people appear with umbrellas and bags. There is an instance in the novel, when Firdaus looks out of her window one rainy day and gazes at the colourful umbrellas and raincoat which in a way constitute the attire of Shillong people. She deliberates on rain drops falling upon people and pavement.

The place and its chilly countryside make sometimes people very happy and peaceful. Firdaus walks into the rain. The feeling of love and rain drops makes her cheeks and nose, graze her hands over the face. She absent mindedly walks through a puddle and revolting squash of dirty water in her sandals brings her back to the present. In the cold afternoon, Montessori school girls with white handkerchief crossed by harassed parents. Firdaus's vision makes her to see "People, their visions obscured by umbrellas bent at odd angles to fend off the rain, clumsily knocked into each other on the narrow pavements" (4).

Monsoon an another natural cycle of Shillong is also featured in the novel, *Lunatic in My Head*. However, it does not stop the inhabitants from going about their work. Firdaus house walls suggest the torrential rain. She contemplates, "raining continuously, heavily, obstinately, for five full days and it didn't look like it would stop" (252). The following lines from Anjum Hasan's *Street on the Hill* which depict the rainy Shillong, "on days when the gravel was dark under rain; / time touched by the grace of such women who led / wordless lives, and such men who ran sweet-shops / in faded black ties" (6).

Shillong experiences severe mist during winter. Winter period is quite icy in Shillong with the hotness plunging to 2Â°C. The months of November to February are evidenced as the

coldest in this place. Sophie associates pollen and kites with winter and especially with the month of February. She likes both, “associated them with February, and February, she associated with the wind” (323). She observes the pollen in crackle of sandstone and bright clear blue sky was criss-crossed with kites like “purple and orange and green dots in the sky, sent up by boys hidden from view who tightly gripped their wooden spools as they danced on lawns to the movement of swaying strings” (323). She keeps standing and taking in the wintry wind.

The cover page of the novel, *Lunatic in My Head* sports a picture of a man holding an umbrella, a young girl by his side and a large water body to their right side. This picture articulates the climatic condition and watery facet of Shillong. Evidently, there could not have been another better pictorial representation of the city Shillong in a capsule. It presages the impending narrative tale of Shillong. It also sets the tone for a bleak, yet pleasant fictional aura. The umbrella represents the dark side of the peak in the Shillong. Where Anjum Hasan’s *Lunatic in My Head* colours in Shillong a drizzly blue, which for now is a stand-in for the wonderfully homogenized North-East, the hitherto unappreciated white space on the Indian legendary map. Sumana Roy in her review of *Lunatic in My Head* titled, “The Legitimacy of Failure” comments:

Zac O’Yeah’s cover photograph shows a man holding an umbrella, his back to the world. There is a tiny reflection of this image on the water to his right. There couldn’t have been a better image to represent Shillong’s relationship with the world: tilted and dishevelled from days of rain, Shillong is curiously self-content. Its back is to the world and yet it can hear; it looks at itself, sees its image as diminished, and waits with umbrella in hand. Its temper is one of anticipation.

The title of the novel, *Lunatic in My Head* is derived from the Pink Floyd song, 'Lunatic in My Head'. Anjum Hasan appropriates the name to communicate the surrogate character of the small town life. One where borrowing is not just exaggeration of thought but a fraction of the small town's natural symbols of asserts the sky as its own. Even if in part as Anjum Hasan paints her North-East with colour of blue which involve the place is watery and rainy blue. Anjum Hasan cannot resist turning this image of borrowing into the literal.

The earth quake in the end of narrative represents the cosmological condition of Shillong. Especially, the Khasi hills which pose threat to such natural calamity. Everyone is eco sensible and come out into the open. Dr Moondy's family come out of house as soon they feel it. Ribor, Bodha and Ibomcha step out of the shop and get into the street. Jason and his aunt come out of the house. Likewise, Das flee out as well.

There is a mundaneness and bleakness about Shillong. There are many who love to be in Shillong and there are rest who want to flee it. Few find other metropolitan cities more conducive place to live and few find Shillong too dull to live any further. However, Mrs Das remarks "You stay here for eight, ten years and then you can't go anywhere else. You get used to this place" (288). Some of the people in Shillong they dislike it because they discover no culture, no proper education too. These people are lunatic and suppose that life is better in other cities. Ibomcha feels, "In the U.S. life is much better" (61) and "Smooth" (61) and there's too much golmal, this type of thing running around, doing this business. There's no respect. Money and all is fine, but in our community respect is on top. The respect and money is higher than everything else.

A general thing which binds the protagonists Firdaus, Aman and Sophie are 'Dkhars' which means 'outsiders.' Socially practised, Khasis feel superior to others, especially, Dkhars who are inferior to the former. For instance, Sophie goes to Kong Salty's daughter's engagement with Kong Elsa, where the people looked at Sophie with indifference. She refuses to have tea or snack and eats very little and this invokes curious glances' from others. Firdaus feels better with Ibomcha who is a Manipuri, and an outsider like her.

Anjum Hasan succeeds in exploring forth the psychological history of the entire town. The people from Shillong have "psychological problem" (188). The psychological aspect suggested is "imaginary" (188) felicity as the characters are fantasist. They fantasise beyond the reality and seem to live in another parallel world. Sophie loves to fabricate about her parentage, Firdaus relates lives to literature and Aman romanticises his gloomy circumstances with music.

The people of Shillong are simple-minded and trusting. Mr and Mrs Das find refuge with Kong Salty, their landlady who does not demand even rental fee. They live in a spacious detached independent house without paying regular rent which has been discounted. Miss Wilson, who is a pernickety woman, is kind and loving towards her students. Sophie finds her very caring and forbearing because "She could not see herself saying all this to Elsa, nor to Jason, nor to her school friends. No, only Miss Wilson would sympathise with Sophie" (203).

Determination is a collective trait of Shillong folks. Aman attempts Civil Services exam second time. He possesses confidence and will power. He believes that it will bring him brilliant prospect. 'Failure make one person bright and holds good futures'. Likewise, there is Mr Das who has strong belief that he will qualify as a college or university teacher. He keeps waiting and

missing good teaching opportunities at school. These people believe in their ability which will elevate them and improve their interest.

Nostalgia is an inevitable characteristic of immigrants living in Shillong. Firdaus is every now and then taken to memory lane. Likewise, Mr Das and Mrs Das also reminisce their lives from past. Dr Moondy a mere MBBS who has come to Shillong from Calcutta for his search for self-identity and self-economical development in the small town. But he also often recalls his past lives in Calcutta.

Sophie's family is peculiar and reserved in nature. This does not confuse her, but habitually aggrieves her to move from them and longing for her real parents. Mr Das does not chat with other parents because he has no job. Similarly, Sophie does not speak more than few sentences. Mrs Das says, "I'm not Bengali" (23), her mother often would say but "I'm from the north. Your father is Bengali" (23). Sophie lives like a loaner, as she did not have any siblings till her baby sister arrived. Likewise, Mrs Das feels lonely as she is cut off from her family. She married Mr Das against her family's wish and so she is estranged from them.

Similar to any other Indian small city or town where more or less everyone knows everyone by face, Shillong also promotes rumours. Tittle-tattle circulates freely among every one. Kong Bina is one of the agents of rumours circulating and exchanging from her one work place to other. Aman is unhappy with the rumours in the town and he develops little distaste for it. There are many rumours and one such is Partho using Ibomcha's name into drugs. "He's mixing my name up with some drug business. Drugs is one thing I never touch" (116).

Anjum Hasan alludes to the spiritual psyche and internal side of characters representing the inhabitants of Shillong. Concordella represents the shifting spiritual manners of Shillong. She

belongs to a Christian orthodox family, however, she is unaffected by their conservatism. She has been a frivolous person in her life till her brother's influence:

You know, all these years I've been going to church, reading the Bible doing everything that everyone else in the family does. And I never worried about it - or even thought about it. It was natural, it was a family thing. But two years ago, I started questioning everything. It was terrible. I couldn't stop. I don't remember how it started, but for two years I was in hell, I was outside everything. I would make excuses not to go to church. I'd be afraid to pick up the Bible because as soon as I opened a page, I would see the lies. I hated it every time my brother started on his priest thing. He was pure, you know. He was so full of his belief, there was no place left for anything else. But I was full of holes. (229)

Concordella is utterly reformed by her brother. She is deeply affected by his religious views. She perceives her faith in new light and with awestruck fascination. Banshan told the story of Job and it is "amazing faith! I wasn't feeling it completely yet, but I could see that it was possible, and I prayed to God to make it possible" (232). The prayer takes all the pain to cure her mother and again prayed for forgiveness. I was crying, I couldn't stop at all. As soon as the sermon was over I ran to Banshan. "He took my hand and we sat in the pews after everyone left church and we talked for a long time. He understands these things, Banshan, he's amazing" (232).

Aesthetic persona and academic fervour of Shillong go as one. The town is brimming with intellectuals and creative individuals. Firdaus's observation brings forth such aspects. She is proud of her students and complements, "There are some creative girls in the third year who

might be able to write things . . . stories and poem. I've heard that some of them write poetry" (29). Further, there are creative people in Shillong like Aman and his friends "It's like a concert but there'll also be other things - poetry reading and art work" (233). Kong Elsa is proud of her son Jason, as he works in Bombay as an officer like his father and his grandfather all of them officers.

Shillong is located in North-East part of India where vicious flood of violence drown the peace. Nonetheless, it is relatively diplomatic in Shillong. There is slight disturbance and mild political differences between the Khasis and Khars. The neighbouring states and cities overflow with violence as Ibomcha reports; there are many troubles in Manipur "Too much trouble. In south Manipur, Kukis killing Paites, and in Imphal, one schoolboy was kidnapped and killed while I was there" (120).

Economy of Shillong is stable and people are mostly independent. Even elderly people try to find means of livelihood, like Firdaus's grandfather is a sacred man of eighty- one who involves getting and selling of leather. He has been a migrant from a small village of Bihar; however, he has adapted to Shillong and found himself an enterprise. There are people who have not been educated enough to find a white-collar profession. Some people like Kong Bina scrubs floor in order to earn her income. She works throughout the day at Das family's house and at Firdaus's place. Sharon is another character, friend of Firdaus who runs a sleek beauty parlour. She basks in her job and wins many customers from upper-class society with her witty conversations.

Kong Elsa represents the rich heritage and royalty of Shillong. The word 'Kong' means the respective people of their age are respected person from outside. She has a big bungalow and

she had full-size roots in Shillong. She could sit in front of the window and eat biscuits that were made by bakers just outside her house and “floor on which she’d played five stones, while Elsa sat on her chair and gazed out through the window” (294). Similarly, Kong Salty represents the rich Khasi upper-class. Further, she is a representative of the Natives who has her inheritance in the antiquity.

Some inhabitants of Shillong are from the poor strata of society. These individuals represents the common symptoms of lower-class like hardship and illiteracy, “Kong Bina spoke in her kwai-softened lisp, that Kong Bina was different, that she came from out there where they didn’t speak English, tied babies to their back so that they had their hands free, worked in other people’s houses” (40). There are several others like her who seek employment in an unorganised sector.

There is a sophisticated and glamorous air about Shillong. Firdaus observes the boys are very tall, are playing guitar and speaking good English. Especially, the student from Diphu, Kohima, and Churachandpur have poorly run colleges and business, nonetheless, Shillong gives them more glamour, their walk, their silent moody air of secrecy. Students from backward places come to Shillong and attain overall growth. The place of Shillong is not only a beautiful hill station, but also a grown up city for edification. For instance, “Miss Wilson was a fine human being. It was her English blood, of course. She was half-British and had perfect grammar. Everything of value in this country was the legacy of the British. The most important thing was to master the English language - that was the talisman for success in this day and age” (24).

Eventually, everyone finds peace and all problems seem to have been resolved. Sophie’s family is completely transformed, as her father takes up the job of an instructor in a school.

Mother starts giving tuition at home, and Sophie becomes more attentive in her studies and Aman realizes his fault as of his failure and opinion about his future. Firdaus and Imbocha intend to get married and look forward to their great future in Shillong. “She would marry Ibomcha. She thought with pleasure about the possibility of being associated, however indirectly, with Sharon’s parlour” (343).

Everyone seems to come terms with the life in Shillong. Flossie says, “Thank God we’re not compelled to go to awful places like Calcutta. We keep complaining about Shillong, but think of all the good things about this place” (344). Though the people having everything but the thought of all minds create to each one out of place and out of mind. Like the longing of Nivedita feels of come to Shillong once.

Jason desires to spend his rest of the life in Shillong. He longs to be back in his hometown. His mother is aware of that he experienced more seclusion in his Bombay life. Ribor’s brother dislikes his life in Delhi, because of economic problem. Ribor says “He’s unrecognisable. Hated his life in Delhi and now wants to make as much money as possible to take his revenge on the world. He’s supposed to be running the other wine shop” (17). Similarly, Nivedita who have moved to Calcutta does not like it. Her letters reveal Calcutta is very uncongenial:

hot and humid Calcutta was, how noisy, how confusingly large. She said that the teachers in her school did not consider it necessary to befriend each other, and that she barely spoke to anyone except the Hindi teacher who was also new and spoke poor English. Her class had eighty- five students in it, and they were very

‘undisciplined’. She was tired all the time; she had to take the metro and then a bus to get to school. (344)

Shillong is the city of urban populous. Christianity is the established spiritual passion of the city. Concordella is delineated as a sacred and God-fearing person. Mother Gertrude represents the convent community. Many of the inhabitants came in contact with Christianity shared with the nuns - high opinion for convention and they cherished to talk with everyone. For instance, Miss Wilson helps Sophie, to say Mother Superior “I’m adopted” (203). The church has an important role in Shillong. People believe in its authority and pronouncement, “I think Nivedita should speak to Mother and get the Church behind her” (6). Nuns put the fear of God and they should understand the problems and they pray for them. That’s what all should believe the God like nuns and mothers.

The demographic interpretation of Shillong people shows limited Hindu population like Mr Das’s family, Kong Bina, and Moondy family. Their faiths are dissimilar from one another. Christian people are very Presbyterian and preceding currency of Protestants and Roman Catholics. Muslims are also restricted like Hindus as Firdaus and her grandfather. The people blend with each other never letting differences come in between. For instance, Kong Elsa offers her house to Mr Das’s family irrespective of community or Native place, “just stay here. Things are not safe. You can give me the rent later” (296).

Shillong is connected by roads and not by railways due to its highlands. The buses are packed with the school students, officers, teachers and other people. More or less, the people choose the mode of taxi from one place to another place. Despite its bustling streets and hustling activities, there is no reference to road traffic in the novel. The public transport services have

sufficiently coverage linking with the important places within the State and with places in neighbouring states.

House and houses represent larger place. There is a house which Sophie absorbs into. It was not her house, but the imagination of her mind takes her to the place which is a large three-storied green building with bright red grills on its windows and a flat roof. Her vision to the house torn down little by little “the windows and doors pulled out, the walls knocked down with weapons whose names Sophie didn’t know, by men with shawls wrapped around their heads and covering their noses and mouths to keep out the dust” (328).

The public buildings in Shillong represent typical Indian infrastructure with leaking roofs and clutter. Firdaus’s workplace is another representation of Shillong’s public buildings. It is not very tidy, “mosaic floor of the staff room was crisscrossed with wet footprints and the umbrella holder - a grimy plastic bucket - was already full” (5). It also expresses the poorly arranged piles of brown paper-covered notebooks in the staff room and small staff room contains a cold metal chair which describes the bad furnitures of the school and the organization.

Lunatic in My Head makes references to other Indian cities as well. Delhi is the largest mercantile centre in northern India, and also the prime centre of small industries. Delhi is a good place for job opportunity and makes more profit through that. Dr Moondy said about Delhi when he speaks to his son, “Explore your options. The change will be good for you. Maybe you’ll find a job there. There are many more opportunities in a city like Delhi” (330). The city discovers more acquaintance, prominence of mind and the life will rapidly change.

The city has all kinds of people and many tall buildings, schools, colleges, banks, offices, hotels, factories, markets, parks and gardens. The city is expanding day by day and the

concentration of people also will turn over day by day. The good opportunity is to fly over from the place. Delhi is a place of migration because of better job opportunities. The thought of people from place to place depending on the require of their effort and also accessibility of enhanced career opportunity.

Anjum Hasan has photo copied the map of Shillong, supplemented by colours of its people's life. It is an outstanding cartography of the place. *Lunatic in My Head* takes the reader to an animated trip of Shillong. The episodes from lives of individuals help in understanding the place better. A relative study of the fictional characters and their mannerism complete the picture of Shillong.

Anjum Hasan's second novel *Neti, Neti* which is a sequel to *Lunatic in My Head*, *Neti, Neti* brings forth Shillong as well. Unlike the former, it has allocated only a particular segment of the narration to Shillong. Moreover, Shillong appears in the recollections of Sophie Das who seeks solace in her thoughts. She returns to her home town to escape the cacophonies of life, nonetheless, stays only for a brief time. Shillong at this point is changed but, only by slight degree. The novel which remarks the life of Anjum Hasan and her passages of two places, imagination place of Shillong and Bangalore. The study of Anjum Hasan's novels make people mesmerise forever.

CHAPTER III

CHAPTER III

BANGALORE

The concept of globalisation and capitalism has affected Indian socio-economic system as well. These ideas have crept into India since emergence of information technology ventures and increase in the human resource in India. Many employees are working for international employers outside India outsourcing their services. This has not only brought a change in the economy, but also a remarkable transformation in the socio-cultural aspect. Bangalore is one of the major sources of these new ideas and methods.

Bangalore is the capital city of the Indian state of Karnataka. It is located on the Deccan Plateau in the south-eastern part of Karnataka. Bangalore is India's third most populous city and fifth-most populous urban agglomeration. It is known as the Silicon Valley of India because of its role as the nation's leading Information Technology exporter. It is located at a height of over 3,000 feet (914.4 m) above sea level hence, Bangalore is known for its pleasant climate throughout the year.

Anjum Hasan's *Neti, Neti- 'Not This, Not This'* exposes the complications and confrontations of an Indian woman's life in a metropolitan city. An article in *The Hindu*, Oct. 22, 2010 reviews, "The book *Neti, Neti* tells the story of 25-year-old Sophie Das, who has moved from Shillong to Bangalore. Here, she and her friends explore the city's many facets: its nightlife and call centres, the rock concerts and homes of the newly rich. But the young woman soon begins to feel alienated in the money-mad city".

The backdrop of the city is constituted by – road and industrial accident, flamboyant shopping malls; late night party's bar and lacklustre consumerism make Sophie feel

apprehensive. The glamour of the city makes her feel trapped and lost. She feels the luxury cloying and even bland. At a point, she yearns to escape into the void from the boredom of life in Bangalore.

Clash between freedom and constraint is a functional phenomenon. Excess of freedom capsizes the conformist convictions which lead to frenzied condition. The place has produced an immense quantity of provisions opportunities, and freedom among them. The city of wonders has lack of opportunities. The young entrepreneurs are creating new technology, and new tools are utilized well in Bangalore. A city looks for new industries, software companies, telecommunications and research institutions in India. As Sophie masters the system in days “figured out the software, experienced no trouble with American accents or American spelling or American references to American cars and supermarket chains and rock bands cigarettes brands. She enjoyed the fixity of all the little rules of the captioning universe” (39).

Elasticity of lifestyle in Bangalore is an inevitable factor encouraging immigrants. Migration is an important motive for this cultural amalgamation. Generally, people move from one city to another city for various reasons and Bangalore attracts massive migrants on account of its being a hub of information technology. This proffers plethora of hope and opportunities. Besides, it avails an elastic lifestyle based on choice and complete freedom. This elasticity of lifestyle allures Sophie from Shillong to Bangalore to weigh her odds.

The opening of the novel, *Neti, Neti* is set in a suburb of Bangalore. It describes a normal morning which is eventful. The reference to the presence of nature in the form of Birds calling is paltry suggesting that nature has abandoned cities. It is a lazy morning to Sophie and many

others like her, whereas, it is perhaps lively one to others. The window of Sophie Das's living room through which she is looking out is allowing a glimpse into her life:

First, the few birds remaining on earth calling urgently through the open window. Then the landlord, arguing with any one of the three nodal visitors of his morning- the jasmine-seller, the greens-seller, the milkman. Finally, the phone shrieking with all the insistence of the person calling. Sophie Das crawled out of bed, held the phone a few inches away from her ear and went to stand by the living room window. She liked to, as she talked to Swami, watch out for her landlord's two- year-old grandson who sometimes strayed out to play in the little mound of sand by the roadside, or climbed his grandfather's scooter, or just stood there, arrested by a mysterious thought, till his grandparents decided he'd had enough freedom for the morning and dragged him back, bolting the gate behind him. (7)

Bangalore city is called one of the car capital of the world. Car is a status symbol. However, in cities like Bangalore where American culture dominates, car is one of the daily amenities without which a person will not be able to fit in. Swami represents the car enthusiasm of Bangalore. He knows everything about cars which a car patron ought to know. He wants a car so badly that he is not even bothered by the prospect of repaying the loan:

Sophie was actually car-blind. Swami was always pointing out different makes to her, but where he saw individuality and beauty, she saw something on four wheels that moved. The gleaming black and white Tavera had looked impressive in the showroom window - that was all, whereas Swami's longing for a car was a

capacious thing that could suck him in, make him a shadow that would acquire features and personality only when he became the owner of a car.(8)

Traffic noise is an acoustic characteristic of Bangalore city. The air is filled with clamouring sounds irrespective of morning or evening. The city roads keep busy. The noise coming from vehicles, stereos, people shouting and all in sundry commingle together. Sophie feels bewildered and deaf amidst the loud noises:

Sophie allowed herself rickshaws on rare occasions but she wasn't enjoying it any more. She watched the driver speak into his cellphone and at the same time manoeuvre expertly between long sleek cars and thundering bikes and aggressive buses and other rickshaws that screeched so painfully Sophie had to momentarily cover her ears with her hands. The traffic sounded different from the way it did from a bus. Out here in the open, it became a powerful, inchoate din as overwhelming as the images that flashed past. (36)

The driver of a stalled bus yelling at a tempo-truck wallah, a fat woman balanced sideways on the pillion of a frantically speeding scooter, snatches of music emanating from a car painted with orange flames, a pair of girls dressed identically in black suits and pumps sailing pleasingly through the traffic on two scooters and keeping an energetic discussion going between them. There was an unambiguously insane tinge to the confrontation.

The tremendous changes come in the twenty first century and process of distribution and consumption of goods and services. The city has grown up with modernity.P. Karkhuzhali quotes Fredric Jameson's, "The concept of globalization reflects the sense of an immense enlargement of world communication, as well as of the horizon of a world market, both of which seem far more

tangible and immediate than in earlier stages of modernity” (10). The changes not only in the economic fiddle but also in the socio-cultural values of human lives. Likewise, Sophie’s disposition changes partly, as she drinks beer and smokes cigarettes and goes with her boyfriend to the night pub.

On the other hand, the city of Bangalore provides with ample opportunities and sophisticated services. The progress of the city creates more brilliant bureaucrats, software engineers, hardware engineers and others. Sophie finds an opportunity in Star Titles which has its headquarters in Los Angeles. The work is to “transcribe the soundtracks of Hollywood films so that they could be marked on DVDs” (39). She experiences her job to be flexible and relaxing in a way.

AnjumHasan’s works is mostly about women like Sophie. AnjumHasan points out in *The Hindu* as, though the resemblance between AnjumHasan and Sophie, not the slightest that both moved to Bangalore in their twenty-fifth year. However, AnjumHasan, in an interview with Nisha Susan, *The Hindu* February 12, 2013 emphasized that this is the only likeness between her and Sophie as well the fact that they both felt disturbed in Bangalore. However, a rapid glance at AnjumHasan’s life reveals that like Sophie, AnjumHasan was the offspring of a union between parents hailing from different states of India. In a manner very like to AnjumHasan’s own parents, Sophie’s Bengali scholarly father and unpretentious Punjabi mother might have settled in Shillong to run away the social isolation that their marriage generated.

I’m writing a novel about a woman who is searching for the centre of her life and partly does so through encounters with art - looking at paintings and installations, listening to artists talk, going to the Indian village where another kind of art

exists, supposedly timeless but also very contemporary because it is closely connected with our idea of ourselves as Indians.

The city of Bangalore has practised a remarkable social and cultural change with the advent of liberation and expansion. The most important aspect of globalisation is the means for better economic opportunities. However, people search for self identity and ontological security. Good economic 'opportunities' come along with emotional disadvantages. Sophie is in amidst a throng of ambitious individuals like her; nonetheless, she feels alienated and cut off. She feels estranged even from herself real self. She is unable to identify any one with her mother, father or sister for that matter.

The novel *Neti, Neti* opens with Sophie's experience which is overpowering and surcharged with freedom. She is overwhelmed with every particle of liberty, "the view from the window, the tiny flat and every particle of air in it. She could cook what she liked, smoke to her heart's content, put every object exactly where she wanted it to be and know it would not move unless she moved it. For the first time in her life she was free" (30). But there is a considerable difference between her modest life in the past and sophisticated present. Earlier, she was confined to her house and spent her days daydreaming and sometimes allowed the privilege of paying a visit to her landlady, 'keeping Kong Elsa company' (189). In Bangalore, she finds herself cut loose and astray at times. Somehow, she is rebuked by her landlord and find a curfew imposed on her.

Reading habit of people belonging to Bangalore or cities like it is also purpose specific. These people read to keep themselves updated with latest fashion and sensational rumours. For instance, Sophie was a meticulous reader of shiny lifestyle magazines which educated her on

various aspects of posh life. She got acquainted with the self designed bungalows, the night clubs, the hotels, champagne brunches and tips on where to get the best fixtures. She develops a metropolis consciousness. The breakfast habit is also Americanised. It is made up of toast, butter, and cereals. Sophie grudgingly prepares herself such a breakfast, “Whatever, whispered Sophie, as she went into the kitchen and toasted a slice of dry bread over the gas. She then put to small blobs of butter on four corners of the toast and wait for them to melt” (9).

Road accidents and other accidents also define a metropolis. The lives of people move fast or the people race chasing bigger dreams. As a result, they collide with each other or dash into barriers which go unnoticed by them in their hurry. Sophie observes many such accidents in her commutation. She finds how invaluable life is in this city of consumerism.

The narrative of *Neti, Neti* is punctuated with many road accidents. Traffic accidents appear to constitute the quotidian life of the city. The very fast moving life of Bangalore poses an ominous threat to all commuters, whether on board vehicles or pedestrians. Vehicles crash into one another and run over pedestrians who chase the mirage of their dreams. Sophie feels the life of the city ebbing away with every accident. Sophie was possessed with traffic accidents. She recognized well the sickening, volatile crunch of a bike spinning out of its rider's control and hitting the road, an SUV colliding with a scooter, a lorry crush a small car like a ball of paper. Sophie watches,

She'd seen people die on these streets, or knocked unconscious, or with their legs gone. They'd be folded up like bloody pieces of cardboard and hastily stuffed into the backs of rickshaws and cars to be taken to hospital. She didn't know if it was just her who attracted accidents or if other people witnessed as many as she did

but were able, because of the brain-numbing excess of them, to remain indifferent. Nobody else seemed to think much about it, while Sophie had to work hard to suppress the idea, when she was out, that in the end everyone on the roads simply wanted to die. (38)

There are few other accidents mentioned in the narration. Swami comes across few roads accidents and narrates them to Sophie and friends. These accidents occur when vehicles collide into each other when drivers oblivious to road ahead them are tuned with music inside. Children seem to be the victims of these accidents as well when their parents are engaged in doting on shopping displays or other exhibits.

The idea of carousing and merrymaking is also tainted with American habits like smoking and drinking beer. Disregard of their cultural backgrounds, the youngsters in Bangalore involve themselves in activities which are unhealthy and not social by terms of Indian standards. They feel deranged and in order to be on a common platform, participate in such activities. Sophie and her friends enjoy each others company by consuming beers and drugs:

Four people drinking their beer, passing around joints, guffawing not with the intention of breeding envy in the hearts of the Resident's Welfare Association office-bearers but simply because life looked at from the perspective of a chilled Kingfisher on a Saturday night was funny. Sophie's friend Ringo Saar had drifted out to the balcony to take a phone call and, trying balance his beer bottle on the ledge, accidentally dropped. The bottle crashed outside Chinnappa's kitchen door which was wedged against the side of Sophie's apartment building. Half an hour later, two plainclothesmen were seen unlatching the gate downstairs. (17)

The human relationships are Westernised and revolutionized as well. There is strong suggestion to lesbianism in *Neti, Neti*. Maya likes Sophie and it is revealed that she yearns for a more intimate and physical relationship with her. Likewise, the more overt lesbian yearnings are relatively perceptible in the relationship of Naomi and Shanthi. Although Shanthi has no such intentions but Naomi's intimacy is conclusive. Maya elaborates to Sophie:

Right now it's all hunky dory but Naomi might reach a point where she wants to make a move that Shanthi resists - without actually realizing what she's doing - and then there's no knowing what'll happen next. There's going to be a big comedown. I can see it coming. Like this morning, she kept trying to convince Shanthi to come to the US for a honeymoon and Shanthi was uncomfortable but she didn't know how to deal with it. (51)

Bangalore seems to live counter culture era of America. It has gone back in time and away from India. The aspects which fascinated Americans then, like, Eastern spirituality, drugs, freedom, and nonconformist man-woman relationship mesmerise Bangalore. The youngsters live on joints, drink beer, and freely initiate and terminate relationships. Sophie and her friends represent this type of typical Bangalore youngsters, a faction of locals, immigrants who all adopt the same routine.

Spirituality is another chic and trendy aspect of Bangalore city. Satsangs are as popular among the people as the Rock concerts. *Neti, Neti* brings forth one such spiritual aspect which is fawny and pretentious. Baba Sampije represents this facet of charlatan ways of life where people pretend to seek peace and consolation. Sophie's friends and her landlords attend the Guru's

consecrated presence for various reasons. The observation of Sophie of the sanctum gives a vivid picture:

Then the singing stopped abruptly. A man got up, bowed low before a giant picture of Baba Sampige's heavily garlanded face and began to elaborate on a banana metaphor in an adroit mixture of Kannada and English. From what Sophie could understand, he was saying, after Baba Sampige, that the ritualistic elements of all religions are like the skin of the banana, while they are in their essence, shorn of their rituals and symbols, like its flesh. Because of our emphasis on the difference between religions we are left holding the skin, forgetting that the flesh is the point - the flesh that stands for lovepeace truth regardless of the religion. Sophie considered the metaphor. If the skins these metaphorical bananas are what we end up focusing on because they signal the differences between religions, shouldn't all these skins at least look different so that you can tell a Christian banana from a Hindu one, notwithstanding the fact that when you peel either you get the common lovepeace truth with Perhaps he could have explained his point better by talking.(80)

Laughing club is one of the popular venues in cities like Bangalore. It is popular among its inhabitants as a beauty parlour or a cafeteria. Stress, boredom, loneliness, and frustration all define the lives in cities like Bangalore. Hence, laughing clubs and other therapy clubs attract people, "Chinnappa was a humourless man except for his sessions at the laughing club that convened in a maidan twice a week, when it's two dozen members held their sides and laughed helplessly nothing in the belief that such objectless mirth improved their lives and lengthened their life spans" (21).

Hasan renders very good specimens of language and culture in Bangalore. Language is an important part of culture. The language of Bangalore is multilayered. Kannada, English, Hindi, Tamil, and other South Indian languages constitute it. In some way, the language of this metropolis is a brew from all languages spoken. Even the regional language, Kannada is affected by encroachment of other languages. The local people speak Kannada:

One of the men grabbed Ringo and the other started cross questioning Sophie about why she was letting people make all this 'galata' (that uniquely Bangalorean shorthand for trouble, whatever its origins and whatever its aims) in her house. Didn't she know this was a respectable neighbourhood full of educated people - judges and doctors and headmasters, those were the kind of people who lived here? Sophie said: ask my landlord. I never make trouble. Go across the street and ask him. Leave us alone. To which the man said - drinking and smoking are talking too much? What job do you do? Software aah? Too much money aah? That's why you can open your mouth. (17)

Restaurants are strewn all over the city as they form the lifestyle of people. There is more reference to eating in the restaurants than cooking in the kitchen in *Neti, Neti*. People use them for meeting friends, passing time, to avoid the labour of cooking, and to fit in the Bangalore way of life. Sophie frequently goes to such spots to drink and eat. There is an elaborate description of a restaurant:

Sophie sometimes came to this bustling fast food restaurant with Maya. Its walls were painted red to match the red baseball caps and candy-striped shirts of the staff, all of them young boys who seemed to be injected with the robot drug. They

all smiled and said 'Sure, ma'am' with their hands behind their backs in exactly the same tone when the food was ordered, unloaded plates off trays with perfectly identical flourishes and glided smoothly across the tiled floors like ever-multiplying figures in a computer game. Sophie could never tell them apart, but that didn't bother her. She focused on the food - the way lettuce drowned in mayonnaise squelched out of the chicken burgers when one bit into them, the uniformly golden colour of the French fries, the taste of spaghetti doused in ketchup, the searing fizz of a cold drink on a hot day. (46)

Sophie feels very insecure and lost in Bangalore. She is completely lost in herself and feels a sense of homelessness, alienation, existential fears, insecurity, loss and despair in a new location. The prevalence of mindless consumer's culture troubles her very much. Her vision of a child's death in a shopping mall and the bereavements of the child's parents weigh heavy on her. Sophie shares, "He died on the spot. I saw it happening. I saw him falling, I saw him hitting the car, head first. His eyes were wide open when they lifted him up. He was bleeding from the head. They didn't want a scene here so they whisked him away" (73).

Bangalore is a city of passersby who come for job and return after considerable amount of gain. Sophie represents such fleeting sojourns. She adopts the new lifestyle which includes - clothes, food, leisure activities and friends. She adapts herself to fit in. She replaces her habit of reading with hanging out with friends in bars and clubs. She replaces the company of his family and neighbours with colleagues and party-going friends. She trades a lot of her habits and mannerisms with new culture and custom to blend in.

Anjum Hasan's *Neti, Neti* is connected with past life of Sophie and Shillong by means of memories and reminiscences. She remembers her baby sister from past when she looks at her landlord's grandson. The looks of Mani look like her baby sister Mukulika. She remembers and relishes her present relationship with the child, "two-year-old grandson who sometimes strayed out to play in the little mound of sand by the roadside, or climbed his grandfather's scooter, or just stood there, arrested by a mysterious thought, till his grandparents decided he'd had enough freedom for the morning and dragged him back, bolting the gate behind him" (7).

Memory is another personal artefact of individuals like Sophie who have left their homes far behind. They carry memories like any personal accessory. Sophie's moral short struggle with Mr. Bhatt reminds Sophie of her moral science class. Her memories are associated with her three books. Throughout the novel she clings on to these three *Swami and Friends* at the age of nine and *Vivekananda: Awakener of Modern India* at thirteen and *Madame Bovary* at the age of eighteen. Her sight of these books takes her to Shillong, her home town and away from her present area. There are slight traces of identity and completeness which in her memories, is very fragile. Likewise, Maya, Sophie's manager, cling to her past through a family album.

Besides relating to the past, these memories prove to be a fulcrum supporting the real identities of these individuals. The construction and reconstruction of identity through her past memories describes her sense of security to her insecure life in the metropolitan city. Sophie "started to smooth out a pair cotton trousers. Ironing was her peculiar obsession - a way of withdrawing from a faulty world into a perfectionist's universe" (78).

Lack of family ties is palpable among immigrants who have migrated for employment in Bangalore. As a result, they are prone to accept love relationship and sometimes even go to the

extent of living cohabitation. Further, there are girls who strike friendship among themselves and live like a family. Sophie finds Swami as her friend and soon takes their friends Cohabitation or living together is a very common social aspect in metropolis like Bangalore. It is not in favour of Indian tradition; nonetheless, it is gaining popularity on account of economy and human relationship. 'Sleeping-over, is another American habit practiced by youngsters in Bangalore. Sophie has allowed Swami a sleep-over her place and likewise Anu longs for one:

Anu sat up in excitement, 'Hey, can Shiva and I borrow you place when you're gone?' She winked at her and started to tell her in a low voice, as Ringo and Shiva drifted out to the balcony for a smoke, how it was out of the question spending time together in the shared apartment - there were so many girls lodged there now it was hard to know who was who. And since Shiva lived with his parents there was nowhere she could spend a few private days with him.(94)

The struggle to reconstruct the identity yields no desirable results for Sophie. She has lack of feelings to recognise kinship which provides a sense of security to the people in the fresh location. VennilaRamanathan pointed out GayatriChakravorthySpivak's quote, "In the field of rational analysis, a feeling of recognized kinship is more desirable than nationalism" (174). As Sophie lacks of feelings to go back to Shillong for a week to recreate her lost of happiness and identity.

Nostalgia becomes a permanent emotional state of immigrants in Bangalore especially those who have left their families behind. For instance, Sophie misses the winter mornings in Shillong. She longs to wake up in the winter mornings and look at the drifting mist. She yearns

for the scenes through her house window at Shillong which filled her days. Moving persons and inert house amused and supplied her dreams and fancies.

Bangalore is a source of energy which is both powerful and ugly. It is a city of madness unlike Shillong which is a city 'far from the madding crowd'. The city is not merely proliferated but reproducing itself. It is a city of fashion and money. The later is very much required to invest for the former. The city has possessed a great zest for ugliness. Everyone just wanted to obscure the view, blot out the sky, and erase the gaps. "The city not just proliferated but kept reproducing itself. And so you never arrived anywhere in Bangalore" (36).

Anita Balakrishnan quotes Rajeswari Sunder Rajan's term "New Indian Woman" to describe Anjum Hasan (13). Anjum Hasan is a new Indian woman who has moved from Shillong to Bangalore and invests her potential in prolific endeavours. Rajan further says, "She is new in the senses of both having evolved and arrived in response to the times, as well as being intrinsically 'modern' and 'liberated'" (13). Sophie is the protagonist of Anjum Hasan's both the novels, *Lunatic in My Head* and *Neti, Neti* who is a representation of such women.

Money is the cause and source of several aspects of life. In few parts of the world it seems most important object of every one's life. Everyone is short of money to buy or to seek something. There are people who buy things for the sake of buying and not as a result of need. The relevant example is "Madame Bovary was no loan junkie. It was just that her longing for love and adventure often took the form of buying things she didn't need with money she didn't have" (9).

Buying things on credit or procuring a loan is another practice of people in metropolis like Bangalore. Swami's longing desire for money for getting a car Chevy Tavera. The thoughts

of loan “It’s not about liking loans, it’s about liking the things you can buy with them” (8). He works in a call centre, managing calls from America, problem-shooting credit card terminal and payment service failure. As Swami laments the ‘unreal’ life BPO activity in Bangalore,

But I want their damned credit card terminals and their payment service systems to work. I want no one in America who calls me to feel like - heck, this guy’s useless. The rotten thing is that if there’s a real problem, we can’t fix it. We can only tell them to wait while the technical guys do their bit. It’s not real, what we’re doing. That’s why it’s frustrating - because it’s not real (66).

Undeniably, Bangalore is a city of economic and pecuniary opportunities. Besides providing ample job opportunities, the cost of living in the city given a chance for everyone to make money. People who thrive and wisely contemplate their economical matters succeed. Swami enlightens Sophie on the changing vista of Bangalore’s economy. He appraises the value of fixed assets:

Land is gold, Sophie. I'm seeing this happen before my eyes - people in my neighbourhood, who just ten years ago ran pani-puri stalls and sold fruit from pushcarts are now driving Hyundai Accents and have three apartments each - none of which they live in. They cling to their poky old houses and put all the apartments on rent, clear off their bank loans in half the expected time, then invest the money in more apartments. This is getting fucking insane, man, I can't believe it. (65)

Bangalore has a mosaic culture. It is a representation of multicultural India at microscopic level. Everything is an alloy or blend of several others. Food habits are also

heterogeneous by nature. The Hindu people look for food which is pure vegetarians such as white rice, pumpkins, beans and sambar. However, others like Muslims look for non vegetarians such as mutton biriyani, chicken gravy.

A place has an influential role in an individual's life. It is a powerful agent of change and transformation. Sophie is a changed person herself in Bangalore and likewise her boyfriend, Swami. This change is at a great degree, "Swami had changed, she had changed she and Swami as a unit had changed" (15). Though the changes should come one in other like AnjumHasan's changes come from her father because of his more books, and her husband. This is not influences but the change of impressions.

City is a place of building where people live in one another. This is also symbolic of the hierarchy both at social and personal level. Each building has different angles on the floor and balcony. Such buildings have balcony which punctuate the lives with freedom of air and sunlight. Sophie enjoys one such balcony to smoke and to look around. The atmosphere of the place make her more dream around her life as wherever she goes by the way her imagination follows her.

Bangalore is a recent emerging capital of pubs and malls. Sophie combines with a group of friends whose performance are mainly visiting malls, drinking in pubs, smoking grass and holding house parties. The progressive of city malls and pubs are Sophie's most wanted pub, where she often meets Swami. Through this she has lived in Bangalore only a year and yet her life has been transformed to other place where now she is 'free' as her life in her own and depend on others:

The following afternoon, Sophie was in her favourite pub, waiting for Swami. All over the walls were posters advertizing events that had happened a long time ago. They were no longer announcements but yellowing commemorations: Pink Floyd's *The Wall* live in Berlin in 1990, The Who at the Marquee Club in London, Bowie's *Changes One*. Accompanying these were larger than life black and white portraits of Bob Marley smoking a joint and Frank Zappa on a commode. Above all this, painted directly onto the low ceiling, was an outline in black of the Beatles. (59)

Bangalore city outskirts are sprouting with malls. The lifestyle needs of people and mall culture in India is rising fastly, outskirts of cities like Bangalore, Chennai, Mysore, Hyderabad and other cities are experiencing an increased growth of malls. There are more than hundreds of malls in urban as well as rural areas of the city. Sophie believed these malls are very amusing and add glamour to the city:

The new mall was clogged with Saturday night shoppers and in the atrium, on a tiny ramp, a fashion show was in progress. Girls with jewellery glinting like mirrors, wearing richly embroidered saris of silk and georgette, walked up and down coyly and occasionally sat on a chaise lounge, considering each other wordlessly through eyelashes weighed down with mascara. Men photographed the models with their cellphones. (68)

Anjum Hasan has provided a map in the novel, in order to render a topographical experience of Bangalore to the readers. The map of Bangalore describes that major hotels, railway stations and other places are connected from one to another. This includes the tiny patch

of nineteenth century mint- green; Cubbon Park is one of the biggest park in the city. Its landmark contributing to various historical monument and government buildings; cultural, scientific institutions other than in the park. The heart of concentric circles encompassed Malleswaram on the left, its grid of streets designed by British engineers.

On the top of the grand Indian Institute of sciences with its “own irregular camouflage of green” (264). The high streets of Indian Nagar is with more glitzy shops, and restaurants. At the bottom of the map, there is LalBagh or called the name of botanical garden. This park has rare plants with watering system, beautiful lawns, flowerbeds, lotus pools and fountain. There are no rivers, but many lakes watering the valley. LalBagh is well protected with stone walls as enclosures and it has four approach gates – North, West, South and the East gate.

Construction of buildings is another quotidian or habitual feature of Bangalore. Sophie really understood that noise is permanent one and the voice of the city is whirring, manic hum of urgent construction. The sound of place followed Sophie wherever she went “the growl of mixers churning cement and sand and gravel, the shouts of constructions workers relayed from floor to floor through the shells of the buildings they were creating, the buzz of sparks flying from the torches of men welding gates and window grilles” (9). After one year morphing into something like “bungalows torn down to make way for office blocks, gifts shops becoming travel agencies, internet parlours covered to coffee shops, everything succumbing to this fantastic flux” (79-80).

Switching over jobs is a familiar career practice of individuals employed in Information Technology. It is popularly known as job-hopping. This is a pattern which everyone likes to follow in hope of better salary every time. As a result, interviews are like annual exams for the

job seekers which happen every year even after securing a good job. Anjum Hasan has not missed out to incorporate an episode of interview in her typical Bangalorean novel. Sophie attends interview after arriving at Bangalore. The most effect of presentation, qualitative research, a technical knowledge is very significant to the person. It was a five minute or seven minute interview, according to the person or officer. Two or three men surrounded by one and asking questions, about general, subject and each asked Sophie one question, “was she married, was she comfortable reporting for work at 8.30 in the morning and was she familiar with word processing software” (90).

Neti, Neti includes a murder and a suicide in its narration. This endorses the mental instability of the inhabitants. Shanthi’s mother commits suicide and Rinku Saar murders Rukshana. An unthinkable gruesome deed like murder is effortlessly through in Bangalore. Stress, betrayal, emotional instability, and many are might inspire a murder, yet, it is an appalling occurrence. The aftermath is described thus:

Rinku Saar had killed Rukshana. For the first hour after they got to the apartment, this was so shockingly absurd that they sat down together, unable to look at each other, everyone trying desperately to grasp this. Again and again, someone broke in to say in a cracked voice - He murdered her? It can't be. After a while, other questions were asked and the tears started spilling and shock only grew. He had a knife in the car? He stabbed her till she died? He dumped her by a lake? What was the question to which Rinku had decided the only answer was murder?(136)

Literature is one of the thin layers enveloping the narrative of *Neti, Neti* as well. Relatively, individuals of Bangalore do not seem interested in reading like the readers in

Shillong. Sophie, however, pressurises Swami to read *Swami and Friends*. AnjumHasanis fond of intertextual allusions in her fiction. She also shows the relationship between literature and life.

In one of the article of *The Hindu*, March 8, 2014she says:

Flaubert's Madame Bovary, My character Sophie Das in my novel *Neti,Neti* is somewhat obsessed with her too! Emma Bovary is a touchstone for Sophie. She wants to model herself on *Emma* – someone who follows her heart, is a romantic. But she also realises that Emma is self-deluding and self-destructive. I love what Carlos Fuentes says about how Madame Bovary is the daughter of Don Quixote. Like him she believes what she reads and she goes out into the world to apply the precepts of literature and falls flat on her face!

Bangalore inspires immigration at international level. It feeds individuals with dreams of moving abroad and finding better opportunities to earn money. It is easier to find job in Australia and United States from Bangalore. There are many in *Neti,Neti* who considers going abroad to earn better and more. Once, in Bangalore the desire to earn more and lead more luxurious life is triggered off. The dreams of the sea “Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide” (108).But everyone should found hard to challenge the fake clarity of the dreams in white and black are “the shabby present, the pristine future” (109).

Music in Bangalore is Western and is a fusion of many Indian harmonies. The metropolitan city of Bangalore patronised many Western bands including that of Rock, “played a quick riff on his guitar, then shouted ‘Good evening Bangalore’ and was greeted with shouts of approval” (110). It could start with ‘Going Down Blues’ (110) from uncle Rock’s latest album.

Bangalore is called the city of garden. The country has large parks and open space in addition to tree lined avenues in all sides of the city. It gives space of freedom to people who are confined inside their air conditioned cubicles and apartments. It is also a symbol of edification. Ironically, the city of busiest industrial parks require garden to inhale in the air of liberty.

Sophie looks out the city is and says, “The lights of the occasional all-night pharmacy flashed by, there were people asleep in bus stand shelters, and cars whizzed past with a speed denied to them by day, some leaving sounds of loud music and laughter after them like a vapour” (132). The garden offers serene environment and delightful respite from the humdrum of the city.

The environment of a metropolis like Bangalore is relatively less polluted when compared to other metropolitan cities in India. The city also smelt the smell of good gone sour and bad water in the city’s lakes and mangy bodies of stray dogs and the garbage around at street corners. It is because again a symptom of American lifestyle where people require hygiene at least to look important and modern.

However, despite all the collective efforts of individuals to transform the city into New York or Losangeles, it still remains Indian. There are strings which bind and stop the progress tort. There is a typical Indianism about the city as well besides its great attempts to attain absolute Westernisation. Sophie observes,

the people eating their cheap meals in the fast-food Darshinis, the ITexecutives with their glossy identity cards slung around their necks, chattering animatedly as they waited to cross the road, the woman who sat at the edge of a pavement in a surprisingly clean sari but feet that looked like great fungal life-forms, the stench

of sewage that contrasted with the towering apartments on whose distant balconies. (163)

The city of Bangalore is heaving with new coming immigrants. It is growing in population. The escalating populace is evident in the buses, “It seemed to Sophie that Bangalore's buses got more crowded every day. Every time the bus came to a halt before yet another stop to let yet another bunch of eager people squeeze in, it allowed itself a tinypause -just after it stopped and just before the first, still unsullied, person hoisted herself onto it, there hung a moment”(276).

Large population is another representative feature of city like Bangalore. There are many people “it was a kind of calamity, the sheer number of them” (163). Every year, people arrived with the foolish hope in their hearts which Sophie had met brightly lit office compartment. There are many people from different area or town in the state coming to study in engineering and medical colleges girls from North-East coming to work as a waiters beauty parlours, other people from big city emigrant to Bangalore need designs boutiques and five-star hotels and architectural firms and advertising companies.

There are several languages spoken in Bangalore. Kannada is marginalised and Hindi English constitute major portion. There are few who are unable to speak or understand Kannada like Maya who finds difficult. Somehow, no one is alienated on basis of language, “The kind of language you have when you're just learning to talk, when a word means exactly what it means - nothing more, nothing less. That simple language has been defaced by layers and layers of hypocrisy” (175).

Bangalore airport is a symbolism of Bangalore city and crackled with affluence. Sophie is new and unable to recognise the place and people came from their branded jeans and homogenous accents and conversations that sounded like “excerpts from a play on the brain-dead middle-class” (185). Bangalore airport is very eventful airport with seventy international and domestic flight landings every day. However, Sophie understood the Calcutta airport better as it was possible to recognized people that country within a country whose hallmark was multifariousness. This is what Sophie had understood as home “a place where everyone is a different ethnicity from you and where your ethnicity defines who you are” (185).

This novel is identical with Bharati Mukherjee’s *Miss New India*, which also describes the young girl who escapes the restriction of small town Bihar to Bangalore. Sophie works in a BPO as like Anjali Bose work at a call centre, falls in love, meet forceful entrepreneurs and marvels at the fortunes being made all around her. Like Sophie, and Anjali’s imagination Mukherjee’s symbolise Bangalore is the popular thoughts of both domestic and foreign have come to stand for something. This central character also young Indian woman who articulates overstated American enunciation and have substituted the abstinence of an earlier generation with the titillation of casual sex, alcohol and nightclubs.

AnjumHasan’s *Neti, Neti‘Not This, Not This’* is a narrative of disillusionment at personal level and enchantment at public level. Sophie arrives in Bangalore with plethora of hopes and dreams. Nonetheless, she realises that she has been wrong in her hopes of finding Bangalore a city of emancipation. Although, the city equips her with freedom, she feels trapped in this sham independence. Eventually, she admits that this was not what she was looking for and, further, Bangalore is nothing like her home town.

The negative side of Bangalore city does not elude the inhabitants or immigrants. Sophie Das discovers the same antagonism in the eventful and fast moving city. Her disenchantment is engendered partly by the chaos and ugliness of Bangalore as she has recognized well the disgusting, unstable critical situation of a bike turning out of its rider's control and hitting the road, and colliding with a scooter and others.

Place and persons who live in it are closely related and identifiable. The people who live in Bangalore define it and similarly, the city describes the inhabitants. *Neti, Neti* delineates a realistic portrayal of lives in Bangalore. More or less, it brings, all the aspects of life in the metropolis of Bangalore such as, spirituality, fashion, Americanised attitude and ways of living. It probes into human relationships which are important to support any society. Further, there is a subtle insinuation that Bangalore is a place far away from other places in India.

The fictional yarns interwoven together, embroider patterns of Bangalorean life. It also depicts the lives which are rooted, the lives which are uprooted, and the visitors who are visiting it. Swami represents the local inhabitants, Sophie the immigrant community, and Nayomi is a visitor from abroad. There is a concrete map of Bangalore city which labels the landmarks. Tout ensemble, AnjumHasan has succeeded in her attempt of rendering a life-like picture of the nascent metropolis of Bangalore.

Through this novel, the entire metropolitan city has the power to change everyone's mind thoughts like AnjumHasan and Sophie. This is relevant to all cases like house, family, job and others which are portrayed in this novel. Though AnjumHasan points out clearly that through her autobiographical everyone come to know about the city of Bangalore.

CHAPTER IV

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Literary text is an interplay between imagination and pragmatism. It furnishes with ideas, thoughts, views, information's, and insight. A study of literature highlights several aspects - human nature, political or social practice, ideologies, and so on. Geographical location is one such aspect which is inevitably a part of a literary text and can be studied at length. There have been several territories: verbally sketched, mentally visualised and whimsically dwelt. Writers, painters and other artists succeed in manifesting the reincarnation of a new place by means of compelling creativity. Literature has been instrumental in facilitating many such domains accommodating ideals, fantasies, facts, histories, counterfactual histories, and pragmatism. Anjum Hasan is one such writer who has prolifically interwoven the boundaries of a real place in her boundless imagination.

Anjum Hasan is attached to her native town, Shillong. This attachment is transferred in her creativity. Her poems and her fiction contemplate on various aspects of Shillong including - nature, people, and socio-cultural aspects. Her imaginary industry coupled with personal experience in Shillong which results in enlightening and interesting literary texts. Further, her experience in Bangalore has become her Muse as well. She translates all her experiences and observations into intricate fictional episodes.

Anjum Hasan feels that people tend to romanticise about Shillong. They have some image of it being a nice-looking place. However, they disregard the city's modernity for it has all the institutions of a modern city. She considers that going to places of interest, if feel well, can

people give a better insight like a tourist's eye is tangible. For Anjum Hasan who has been writing since she was 17, writing has given her a figure of escape from herself. Poetry is identical with the poet and she needed to be unknown. And fiction has given her the opportunity to be unfriendly and explore other themes of her novel.

Her collection of poem, *Street on the Hill* brings forth the splendour of Shillong and its inhabitants. Her novels also concentrate on places and the people living in it. She attaches significance to geography of a place, may it be a room or a city. The following lines from *Street on the Hill* describe the shadows of the Anjum Hasan's room which symbolises a heart of sorrow, "Or Dark Room. Switching off lights, folding ourselves/ into leftover spaces, watching the night spread its cloth / over sofas and vases, hearts knocking against the quiet" (5).

Anjum Hasan's novels – *Lunatic in My Head* and *Neti,Neti* are recent novels which acquaint with her childhood life and present life. Her first novel deals with the exquisite Shillong as she lives with her parents; dreaming, fancying other life and other world. The writer is both an 'insider-outsider' in her birthplace, Shillong. The novel, *Lunatic in My Head* is not a partial depiction in light of favour. It is borne out of the love for the place. She considers that excellent creative writing goes beyond the place though it may happen to become the representative of it, but chiefly the inspiration is to notify a story. The idea was to scrutinise gap with possibilities in writing about people and their interactions.

Her next novel, *Neti,Neti* paints life in a metropolis. It scales the journey from one-horse town to metropolitan like Bangalore. The protagonist, Sophie Das represents the bewildered migrant in Bangalore. She stands for the life back in Shillong and the fast changing world. The

novel delineates the people who represent the local inhabitants of Bangalore as well. On the whole, the characters portrayed signify the mosaic culture of people.

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CHAPTER IV

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CONCLUSION

Literary text is an interplay between imagination and pragmatism. It furnishes with ideas, thoughts, views, information's, and insight. A study of literature highlights several aspects - human nature, political or social practice, ideologies, and so on. Geographical location is one such aspect which is inevitably a part of a literary text and can be studied at length. There have been several territories: verbally sketched, mentally visualised and whimsically dwelt. Writers, painters and other artists succeed in manifesting the reincarnation of a new place by means of compelling creativity. Literature has been instrumental in facilitating many such domains accommodating ideals, fantasies, facts, histories, counterfactual histories, and pragmatism. Anjum Hasan is one such writer who has prolifically interwoven the boundaries of a real place in her boundless imagination.

Anjum Hasan is attached to her native town, Shillong. This attachment is transferred in her creativity. Her poems and her fiction contemplate on various aspects of Shillong including - nature, people, and socio-cultural aspects. Her imaginary industry coupled with personal experience in Shillong which results in enlightening and interesting literary texts. Further, her experience in Bangalore has become her Muse as well. She translates all her experiences and observations into intricate fictional episodes.

Anjum Hasan feels that people tend to romanticise about Shillong. They have some image of it being a nice-looking place. However, they disregard the city's modernity for it has all the institutions of a modern city. She considers that going to places of interest, if feel well, can

people give a better insight like a tourist's eye is tangible. For Anjum Hasan who has been writing since she was 17, writing has given her a figure of escape from herself. Poetry is identical with the poet and she needed to be unknown. And fiction has given her the opportunity to be unfriendly and explore other themes of her novel.

Her collection of poem, *Street on the Hill* brings forth the splendour of Shillong and its inhabitants. Her novels also concentrate on places and the people living in it. She attaches significance to geography of a place, may it be a room or a city. The following lines from *Street on the Hill* describe the shadows of the Anjum Hasan's room which symbolises a heart of sorrow, "Or Dark Room. Switching off lights, folding ourselves/ into leftover spaces, watching the night spread its cloth / over sofas and vases, hearts knocking against the quiet" (5).

Anjum Hasan's novels – *Lunatic in My Head* and *Neti,Neti* are recent novels which acquaint with her childhood life and present life. Her first novel deals with the exquisite Shillong as she lives with her parents; dreaming, fancying other life and other world. The writer is both an 'insider-outsider' in her birthplace, Shillong. The novel, *Lunatic in My Head* is not a partial depiction in light of favour. It is borne out of the love for the place. She considers that excellent creative writing goes beyond the place though it may happen to become the representative of it, but chiefly the inspiration is to notify a story. The idea was to scrutinise gap with possibilities in writing about people and their interactions.

Her next novel, *Neti,Neti* paints life in a metropolis. It scales the journey from one-horse town to metropolitan like Bangalore. The protagonist, Sophie Das represents the bewildered migrant in Bangalore. She stands for the life back in Shillong and the fast changing world. The

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