

**A Marxist Reading of Neel Mukherjee's *The Lives of Others*  
and *A State of Freedom***

SOUMYA PRIYADARSHINI, G.

(17PEN017)

Thesis submitted to

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women

Coimbatore-641 043

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master's Degree in English

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Signature of the Supervisor



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# Chapter I

## Introduction

Literature adds to reality, it does not simply describe it. It enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires and provides; and in this respect, it irrigates the deserts that our lives have already become.

- C. S. Lewis

Literature is one high form of art of beautiful life. It is admirable and thrilling. Literature often does the duty of a moral supervisor revealing didactic lessons to the readers. Literature is not just a composition of leaflets of paper but is one of the best reflections of a man's life. The impact of literature differs from an individual to the other depending upon the creativity, imaginations and perspectives of the readers.

India is one country which is not just alive but is full of spirit because of its varied richness in art and literature. Indian English writings at different ages have given different forms and images to India and still continue to search, discover and rediscover the transition of the country and thereby present it as a passionate nation in the global arena. The rapid changes and growth of the Indian English writings, the challenges and confrontations behind them have successfully raised the standards of Indian literature.

Homi Bhaba states in *Nation and Narration*, "to study the nation through its narrative address does not merely draw attention to its language and rhetoric: it also attempts to alter the conceptual object itself" (3). Accordingly, the tussel and altercations, obsessions and ambitions of the Indian society, its ideosyncracies, trends and repercussions are manifested by the Indian literary writings in a fascinating and astonishing way.

Indian literary writings present to the audience the real depiction of the differences of life in India. In other words, literature is truly the mirror of India. Indian

literature is like a melting point embracing a variety of issues from infinite incalculable fields. Indian writings discuss cultural various subjects such as diaspora, capitalism, social realism, magical realism and eco critical issues. The powerful among them which have succeeded in capturing the imagination of the readers are political studies with nationalistic themes, cultural studies such as women writings with individualistic concern and aspects of modern writing.

Indian English literature is set around the thoughts, feelings, experiences and motifs of the people in India. It is the culture of India, which has set a glorious past of the country. India's multiple languages, dialects, music, dance, sculptures and paintings of India reflect the ethnicity of different traditions and different cultures of the country. Feasts, celebrations, greetings, holidays, folklore and even cuisines are dissimilar in India with regard to culture.

Indian English literature talks about the similarities and dissimilarities between the diversified cultures. It also talks about different conceptions of the nation such as motherhood, post colonialism, migration, diaspora and modernity. But, the fact that all the introspections and the retrospections of the Indian English writings revolve around religion, caste, language and sex is shocking. Religion determines culture and culture determines class and caste. Therefore the plurality of the Indian religion and culture has brought forth 'split- consciousness' among the people leading to prejudice, discrimination and division of regions.

Quoting Eleanor Roosevelt from *Big Hive Mind*, "Pit race against race, religion against religion, prejudice against prejudice. Divide and conquer"! (np). The perverted caste system of India falls in agreement with this quote as caste in India is neither a congenital inheritance nor a spontaneous discovery of the Indians. It was this caste which cunningly imposed the patriarchal burden of 'class' on people. The system of class is a malicious invention crafted indeed to achieve disharmony by dividing people

based on the functions of the society. Class consciousness undermines the abilities and potentials of the lower class and tramples their aspirations and emotions in all in-humanistic manners possible.

Class has stolen the individuality of a person from the lower class denying his birthright to participate in the national development. Untouchability has made the patriarchy, consider even the shadows of the lower class people profane. Such a passage of pathos and penury has established a never - ending struggle for liberty between the exploiters and exploited. As a result of this brutality, protests started breaking out since 1920s condemning such partial allotments and then colonial administration came into being with a system of quotas under which reserved constituencies were given to lower caste Hindus. But these reservations have not made any changes for the oppressed as corruption rules the hearts of the officials and thus the wealth of the elite class hangs a sword around the necks of the poor.

The hegemony of the aristocrats has dominion not only in Asia but also in Western countries since the reign of William and Mary during the victorious coming of shape of the aristocracy. It was then the elite people gained economic, social and political supremacy while the commoners looked upon them even for daily needs. The principles of absolute monarchy were demolished and the rule of law came into being. The Bill of Rights was passed in the year 1791 and the triumph of aristocracy was called the Glorious Revolution and the Parliament of the landowners became the guarding system of law and order. The aristocratic reign replaced legitimate monarchy by arresting bishops and by removing the judges as it wished.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century was a century of aristocrats. The aristocrats gained power over the society and politics even in countries like England, Holland, Germany and France where aristocracy did not take over the monarch. The wealth of the upper class was

significant through agricultural profits. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, there was a huge increase in wealth due to the growth global trade of tea, coffee, sugar, silk, cotton, tobacco, alcohol and opium.

A spirit of enlightenment touched the aristocrats and they sought new ways of learning as they believed that knowledge would enlarge their prospects and dominion. Self-advancement was the motto of the upper class. They enforced strict rules to the lower class and inflicted brutal penalties and punishments on criminals but lived on a different note by themselves. The royalty exerted a mighty influence and dominated the press by manipulating the public opinion. Thus the elite class had eulogised and tenaciously clung on to their hierarchy and their seed of Industrial Capitalism flourished well. It was through this the product of the labour of the suppressed was unjustly taken from them and sold, instead of profiting their own lives.

The fruit of the toil of the working class people remained an alien to the bourgeoisie and their lifestyle raged the proletariats, leading to an outbreak of a revolution between them and the slave community. Revolts, protests and revolution were on air, in demand for liberation of the working class and for the establishment of socialism. It was then, a German philosopher Karl Marx who was from a poor background joined hands with Freidrich Engels and found a school of thought called communism later became Marxism, which fell in one accord with socialism. Marxism teaches that a society cannot be under the constraint of the patriarchal and hierarchal constraint.

Karl Marx who was brought up under the torment of poverty wanted to transform the society for the goodness of the working class and desired to create a class-less environment by bringing out the common ownership in all the means of production, distribution and exchange of goods. Socialism supported state ownership

than private ownership as it was believed to bring about more profit, reduction of working hours and the replacement of the ruins of small-scale, remnants and unorganized production by united and improved labour.

The new way of thinking of equality was introduced because socialists believed that common ownership of production will abolish the exploitative working conditions of capitalism. Marxists and socialists saw that the economic and social circumstances determined one's faith, the nation's legality, societal and cultural frameworks and believed common ownership was the true democracy. Marxism strived to bring into existence, an economy and politics which relied not on the independence of self-concerned profit seekers but which would work for a democratic work place for the betterment of the society.

Terry Eagleton in *Marxism and Literary Criticism* says, "Art, then, is for Marxism part of the 'superstructure' of society" (5). Accordingly, Marx and Engels deemed literature to be a revered mode of art to reveal their conflict theory. Their critical views which emphasized the class struggle and sufferings moved the weaker class to join together for justice and came on the newspapers, journals and other literary pieces. They staunchly believed that art and aesthetics should not just exemplify and exaggerate the conditions of the oppressed truthfully, but seek to make them better. Inequality prevailed in India too and Indian English writers with the zeal for liberty of humanity had started to write on societal issues.

The political venture of Marxism was to overcome the class struggle in the advanced capitalist world. During the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries the Marxist approach successfully made its theoretical presence in all the academic fields - Education, Economics, Psychology, Philosophy, Archaeology/Anthropology, Media Studies, Political Science, Theatre, History, Sociological Theory, Literary Criticism, Aesthetics

and Critical Studies. The political doctrine of Marxism rose up like a whirl wind not only in the West but also in the East. In India during Pre Independence, Marxism declared patriarchy as a weapon of the tyrant and dominant classes against the proletariat.

During the independent movement, colonisation was the centre of focus for all forms of art. Both males and females were the victims of the rigid hegemony of the colonisers. It was in this period, Marxism had propagated tremendously in India in the form of socialist and communist theories, through the literature of scholarly writers. The colonisation of Britain in India paved a perfect platform for Marxism to pick up its momentum and was pre-dominant especially in Maharashtra and Bengal and extensive and passionate cries against the aristocrats were made through essays, poems, novels, magazines, slogans dramas, short stories, one act plays and other type of literary articles in all the tongues of India like Tamil, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, Kannada, Malayalam among which Bengali literature played a huge role.

On the other hand, the Indian Communist Party was established in 1925 and the labour movement began to strike its roots. It is an amazing fact that the youth of the nation were largely fascinated by the ambitious philosophy of Marxism. Mahatma Gandhiji took the role of a decisive factor in introducing Marxism in Indian literature. The first All-India Progressive Writers' Conference took place at Lucknow on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1936 over which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru presided. The location and the date chosen for the conference bore significance in association with the influence of Marxism in Indian literature.

Literature became a powerful medium for the writers to resist the aristocratic masters in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their writings revolved around the themes of Marxism especially around Marginalisation. They wrote on the sufferings of bondage and

fundamentally aimed to alert the weaker section about the fatal consequences of social evils. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, set a start to the national movement through his novel *Anandmath* in 1882. He was the predecessor of writers like Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore and others. Gandhian philosophy and the Marxist philosophy went hand in hand as Gandhiji in *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi* says,

For I want to bring about an equalization of status. The working classes have all these centuries been isolated and relegated to a lower status. They have been shoodras, and the word has been interpreted to mean an inferior status. I want to allow no differentiation between the son of a weaver, of an agriculturist and of a schoolmaster (416).

The time between 1930 and 1965 was a flowering period of the novel form and the Indian fiction in English discovered most of its significant themes, such as struggle for liberty and culture conflict between the East and the West, communal problems, inequality, plight of poor and untouchables, oppression of women, etc. Three pillars of Indian novels in English Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao contributed a lot to Indian literature. The credit and reputation of the Indian fiction in English belongs to them.

Mulk Raj Anand's most of the works talk about inequality, poverty, and social disparity and he projects this theme by portraying characters under child labour, factory and tea workers and gardeners. Stark realism is one of the unique features of Anand's writing. Not only does Anand lament over the life of the deprived but also demands social justice for their sake.

Mulk Raj Anand's works such as the *Untouchable*, *The Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Budi*, *The Big Heart*, *The Lal Singh Trilogy*, *The Road*, *The Private Life of An Indian*

*Prince, Lament On the Death of A Master of Arts, The Autobiographical novels - Seven Summers, Morning Face, Confession of A Lover and The Bubble* depict the sufferings of the Indian folk in different shades. His themes give Anand, a picture of an ambassador for the exploited and he is a mighty crusader against the distinctions but Anand supports industrialization and he believes that it must be introduced judiciously so that the reconstruction of society with the eradication of hunger is achieved.

Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* is a revolutionary novel, written out of a humanist perspective and compassion for the social outcasts, working class and the downtrodden community. In this novel, Anand shows how the working class are exploited at economic level. “. . . the shopkeepers always deceived the sweepers and the poor people, charging them much bigger prices, as if to compensate themselves for the pollution they courted by dealing with the outcastes” (45). Anand brings out the eternal retaliation and conflict between the working class and the upper class people.

*Untouchable* also brings out alienation of an individual from the caste system. This inner conflict which is in opposition with the patriarchy rises inside every proletariat to attain his dignity. Most of the action of the novel takes place at an outcaste colony and in the streets of the small town. Bakha starts his day welcomed by the abuses of his father and is forced to clean the latrines with a brush and a basket. His sister Sohini goes to fetch water from the caste well where she is compelled to wait for a caste Hindu to draw water which is again a routine for her life. Pundit Kali Nath fills her pitcher with water and summons her, with an ill intention to clean the temple courtyard. Bakha who is a proletariat here, understands his position in the society and breaks out in despair thinking,

All of them abused, abused, abused. Why are we always abused? The sentry inspector and the Sahib that day abused my father. They always

abuse us. Because we are sweepers. Because we touch dung. They hate dung. I hate it too. That's why I came here. I was tired of working on the latrines every day. That's why they don't touch us, the highcastes ... For them I am a sweeper, sweeper untouchable! Untouchable! Untouchable! That's the word! Untouchable! I am an Untouchable! (51)

R.K. Narayan's themes concentrate on disaffiliation, education, conflict between tradition and modernity; the East-West encounter, family relationships, etc. Though Narayan lived in the tradition bound society, his realism spreads the wings of independence. R.K. Narayan's characters are multidimensional. Some of them are frustrated and disappointed, some take up renunciation and face irreparable losses and even failures of relationship.

R. K. Narayan's works are mirrors of economy and social politics. His works contain a dialectic view of society. Class relations are well explained in his novels. In *The Guide*, he talks about the class disparity between a sweet vendor and a rich lady with whom the vendor falls into affair. This affair ends up breaking as the class psychology in both as they are different. Though other interpretations may be given for the novel, class stands as a wall between both of them.

Raju from a sweet vendor turns out to be a Manager owner of dance entertainment industry. He becomes greedy and thinks of new ways to increase his capital. Marx states that bourgeoisie must necessarily give a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. Raw material is drawn from the remotest zones and demand for new product ever increases. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *Communist Manifesto* say that Bourgeoisie "compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production" and that the bourgeoisie "creates a world after its own image" (9). From the life of Raju, Marx's saying that Capitalism reduces

all human relationships to a cash nexus, self-interest and egoistical calculation is proved.

Along with Mulk Raj Anand and R.K Narayan, Raja Rao was a nationalist writer. Rao's style reflects the style of Indian vernacular structure and epic folk tales. Gandhian attitude was the main theme of his works which is evident in his *The Cow and the Barricades*. Raja Rao's masterpiece *Kanthapura* emphasises the class conflict in the Indian society. The novel talks about the high privilege of Brahmins while the Paraiyahs or the lower castes are stamped under marginalisation. In 1998 Rao published Gandhi's biography *Great Indian Way: A Life of Mahatma Gandhi*. Thus the contribution of the above discussed trio writers added to the glory of Indian writing but the Indian Marxist literature will be incomplete without the contribution of Bengal literature.

Marxism has its roots deep in the Indian soil and has a fertile ground in Bengal. As said in *Bengal Marxism: Early Discourses and Debates* Bengali, "From the middle of 1930s, art and literature preoccupied the Bengali Marxists ... there were people who were liberal enough to temper this theory to appreciate a number of literary works of the past and allow a reasonable amount of freedom to present -day writers." (20). Bhabani Bhattacharya, Rabindranath Tagore and Sarat Chandra Chatterjee were the trio pioneers of Socialist writing in Bengal.

Similarity between Karl Marx and Tagore is that both of them aspired for a new society free of contradictions, exploitation, alienation and fragmentation and showed the public the power of critical consciousness. While Karl Marx put forward his ideas as demands and theories, Tagore voiced out his views with the aesthetic quality of literary creativeness as poems of spirituality and self-awakening.

Saratchandra Chattopadhyay another Bengali Marxist revolutionist in one of his speeches says, “Those who have given their all to this world, and got nothing in return, the deprived, the weak, the oppressed... Their pain has unlocked my lips” (np). This statement points to many issues such as caste and gender inequalities, economic inequalities, gruesome social realities, and questions of nationalism, which had a need to be separated from the politics of religious nationalism. His concerns seem highly contemporaneous and ethical dilemmas present in his works invoke the ideals and idealism which are an inspiration even to the youth of today. His works such as *A Tale of Some Fifty years Ago*, *Bilasi*, *Memories of Childhood*, and *Memories of Deoghar* talk about individuals who find it difficult to stand against the social diktats.

Saratchandra’s autobiographical work *Memories of Childhood* shows the self-will of a youngster from middle class, who befriends a cook and later discovers the humane and social sense inside himself. In the end note of all his works, Saratchandra is hopeful and optimistic about the future ethics of the nation and he is known as the great humanist writer because of his themes which awaken social consciousness to a huge level. Through his literature, Saratchandra could not make people completely realize the filth of the societal order but successfully evoked in their minds anguish and longing for a better order.

Bhabani Bhattacharya is one of the novelists of the older generation, endowed with a positive vision of life. His purpose of writing was to explore and express the historical realities. He wrote tragedies of freedom struggle and partition, the evils of poverty, corruption, ignorance, superstition, exploitation, greed etc. The theme of freedom is an important recurrent idea in Bhabani Bhattacharya's novels. The themes of hunger and freedom usually go hand in hand in his fiction and both are quite exhaustively voiced. Bhabani deals with political, economic and social freedoms, as

also with the freedom of the mind. The Bengal Famine of 1943 lays the foundational idea for Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers!* Even after *He Who Rides A Tiger* was published in 1955, Bhabani's obsessed idea of the famine remained a haunting memorial novel.

Mahashweta Devi is one among the writers full of spirit in the genre of social writings. Mahashweta Devi fought for the downtrodden; her works have a sense of activism and a genuine concern for the miserable social condition. She was inspired by Tagore. Associated with communist movement in her early life, she was influenced by Marxist which can be seen in her writings and activism. Her novels and novellas like *The Queen of Jhansi*, *Imaginary Homelands*, *Titu Mir*, *Chotti Munda*, *Operation?-BashaiTudu* and *Rudali* have been translated into English including various collections of her short stories such as *Bitter Soil*, *Breast Stories*, *Old Women*, *Outcast*, *Till Death do us Part*, *Dust on the Road*, etc.

Most of Mahashweta Devi's works are about the disparity of tribal people who become the victims for the aristocratic subversion. She had in her the determination to eradicate the unjust and dreadful vortex of feudalism. Mahashweta was a tireless activist battling for the indigenous tribal communities who were called as 'natural criminals' by the British colonisers. Her writings are an inspiration to two generation writers. The novel *Aranyer Adhikar* (*The Rights of the Forest*) is all about the Great Tribal Movement and revolt of 1895-1900. Her *Mother* became popular for its Marxist themes.

*Mother* deals with the police repression of the Naxalite movement in West Bengal, particularly in Calcutta. The novel is not only about the naxal movement but also talks about the massacre of thousands of children due to political affairs. She explains how the naxal movements though quiet remain bound to the social and familial

dimensions. Mahashweta Devi brings out the conflict between the oppressed and the oppressors, the exploited and the exploiters, the innocent and the opportunist and tells how the upper middle class are ignorant of what is happening around them.

Amitav Ghosh is another scholarly writer, a realist and socialist writing about history and memory, political struggle and memory, love and loss, communal violence, travel and diaspora. His fictional and non-fictional works are transnational and global covering spaces yet his Bengali accent is loud in his works.

Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, is a reminiscent of Rushdie with its geographical and chronological experimentations. Through all his fiction, it is proven that history, past and memory are the trademarks of Ghosh. Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* is an eco-marxian novel showing how the unsettlement of people leads to violation of the nature. Marxist criticism it is claimed that Human consciousness is constituted by an ideology. Accordingly, *The Hungry Tide* explores different human beliefs, values, and ways of thinking, feelings and recourses which are persevered to be reality.

Aravind Adiga is one of the realist writers of the present century and his works show a good range of dexterity. He began his career as a financial journalist doing his intern at the *Financial Times*. He had interviewed various important personalities, Donald Trump being one of them. His debut novel is *The White Tiger* which won the Booker Prize in 2008. Aravind Adiga is the fourth Indian author to win the prestigious award. Aravind through his works conveys the message that rest will exist in the nation only when inequalities in the society are removed.

Like other Marxist writes, Aravind too lays stress on the power relations which govern the nation. Arvind's characters are from all races of life and this makes him an efficient critic of modern Indian society. Adiga's writings tell out his sorrow and empathy towards the state of women under feudalism and patriarchy in India. Aravind

Adiga satirises the false notions of the so-called developed India and brings out the condition of India between a modern global economy and the middle class life in India. Aravind Adiga through his novels tries to make people realize their misconception of the social evils.

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* is known for its touch of Marxism. It discusses social and cultural reality of India. It reveals to the audience the bleak and dark facts about India and focuses on the dull economic status of the country. The novel revolves around the conflict between social, cultural, political issues. The protagonist Balram Halwai is a victim of extreme poverty who is suppressed by the dominated by the high culture. He is a misfit in the wealthy and powerful Indian elite society. Balram struggles to heighten his position from low rank so that he would be called 'big bellied man'.

Each description in *The White Tiger* carries Marxist influences. Adiga's description of the village, the landlords and even the animals like buffaloes show the behaviour of the aristocrats and people in authority. It is evident from the lines: ". . . The water buffalo. She was the fattest thing in our family, this was true in every house in the village. All day long, the women fed her and fed her fresh grass, feeding her was the main thing in their lives. All their hopes were concentrated in her fatness, sirâ! She was the dictator of our house!" (20)

As the social evils of exploitation are still alive, necessary is the existence of battle against them. In order to fight back, a revival of revolutionary writing whirls high. Neel Mukherjee is one such warrior against inequality who condemns it through his pen. Neel Mukherjee was born in India in 1970 but was brought up in London. He was brought up in a poor family and went through the fatal experiences of poverty

which can be felt in his novels. Neel's parents had made sure that he and his brother receive standard education. In an article "Neel Mukherjee on Displacement and Desire", Neel Mukherjee says that, "One of the things my mother drilled in to me was that education is the way out of misery or depressed circumstances" (np). Mukherjee was fascinated by his father progressive English and it was from him he developed the love for reading. Mukherjee says that he had read all the early Nobel Laureates—people whose names were not known then, like Sigrid Undset, Knut Hamsun, and Grazia Deledda."

Mukherjee studied English at Jadavpur University, and all his teachers who were Renaissance scholars encouraged him to go to Oxford University. Accordingly, he applied, won the Rhodes scholarship and finished his graduation there. Mukherjee holds a doctorate from the Pembroke college, Cambridge. Mukherjee also received an M.A in creative writing. Later at Princeton, he handled creative writing classes as part of an undergraduate program for students from different majors. According to Neel Mukherjee, if one wants to be a writer, he should first be a reader. Neel Mukherjee is a member of the review committee of fiction, for publications of U.K and U.S such as *The Times* and *Time Asia*. Neel Mukherjee's novels are *Past Continuous* (2008) which was republished in U.K as *A Life Apart* in 2010, *The Lives of Others* (2014) and *A state of Freedom* (2017).

*Past Continuous* and *A life Apart* are about Ritwik Ghosh a Bengali orphan of twenty- two years who has a scarred relationship with his mother. His mother is seen an ambitious figures who punishes Ritwik when he errs but takes pride in his academic achievements. Ritwik extremely hates his mother for the tyranny and beatings he receives from her. He suffers solitude after his mother's death and he chooses to leave

his homeland and go abroad using a scholarship, but his uncomfortable past follows him as an excavating memory. The article “In Another Country” by Supriya Chaudhri says that this novel “superimposes the present on the past or projects the past as repetition, as anxiety, as despair, into the present and future” (np).

He sees his memory of his mother as an haunting ghost and out of a strong desire to burn the past he willingly, wholeheartedly and consciously involves in immoral acts thinking he was revenging his mother who used to punish him for bad habits. He engages in furtive gay and homosexual activities in public toilets. Meanwhile, he writes a novel based on the story of Miss. Gilby, who is the English companion of Bimala in Tagore’s *The Home and the World*. Tagore shows Miss. Gilby as a woman who is exclude from the triangular personal relations and the narrator in *Past Continuous* takes her into account as a mode of entry into the past of history or fiction.

*Past Continuous* and *A Life Apart* are diasporic novel focusing mainly on the loneliness and struggle between purity and impurity or danger. In the latter part of the novel, Ritwik tries to pay his debts of dutifulness to his mom by helping Ms. Anne Cameron, an elderly woman, yet Ritwik’s frustration and his unhappiness haunt him as ‘Past Continuous’. In these two works, happiness does not exist even occasionally. Ritwik is caught between his guilt, regret and the illegal stuffs of the western countries. For Ritwik, city is not just a place but ‘A State of Freedom’.

*India Today* writes about *Past Continuous* as,

The greatest strength Mukherjee’s searing first novel is its astonishing ability to produce the literary equivalent of cinema verite, because he

can uncannily capture a street, a smell, a snatch of song with wordplay that can sting your memories in to a renaissance but this is not to say that the novel is geo-culturally delimited; Mukherjee debates impressively with a blistering pen that. He can uncannily capture a street, a smell, a snatch of a song with wordplay that can sting your memories into a renaissance. Mukherjee debuts impressively with a blistering pen that lacerates afresh every wounded recollection that it uncovers.(np)

This novel won the Vodafone Crossword Book Award for English Fiction in 2008, and was shortlisted for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature in 2011. The novel was conferred with Writers' Guild of Great Britain Award for best fiction. Neel Mukherjee received the *GQ* (India) Writer of the Year Award for the book in 2009.

Neel Mukherjee's second novel *The lives of Others* was published in 2014 and is all about the passions, rivalries, disputes and secrets of a patriarchal, bourgeois, orthodox Hindu family in Calcutta. As the title of the novel suggests, Mukherjee clearly tells the fact that every life is illuminated by the lives around him and intrinsically brings out the details of the lives of the Ghoshes and about the lives of those under their mastery. The novel also explains how inequality first exerts inside the family and then in the society. This novel speaks about Supratik an individual who is caught between 'The Home and the World' which were the two forms of revolution according to Tagore.

Neel Mukherjee dates back to the political mutiny and rebellious outbreaks in Bengal during the 1960s. It was the days when the Communist Party of India was gaining its strength. The novel is semi domestic and semi political but passionately strings together the events which force an aristocratic youngster to step into the

Naxalite Movement. The novel is an Odyssey of Bengal's class, labour problems and poverty. The novel is not totally in a foreign language but the author uses witty words and the novel gives its readers a realistic feeling. Amitav Ghosh tells of the novel as, "Searing, Savage and Deeply Moving: an unforgettably vivid picture of a time of turmoil". *The Lives of Others* was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2014 and is a winner of Encore award of 2014.

Madhumita Chakraborty in her review "In Shades of Grey" of the novel *The Lives of Others* says,

At one level, the story is about the trials and tribulations, joys and jealousies of the Ghosh family in Bhowanipour. At another level, this family is a microcosm of the caste, hierarchical and other societal divisions that plague Indian society even today. Four generations of the family live under the same roof, something that is increasingly rare in a twenty – first century globalized society, where nuclear families are the norm. (35)

Neel Mukherjee's *A State of Freedom* which was published in 2017 is a complicated novel. The novel is all about displacement and migration and so the novel itself is displaced and dislocated. Throughout the novel *A State of Freedom*, there is a search for identity and self-dignity. The way the author has written this novel is ghostly with the thrilling and chilling life stories. The outer stories in *A State of Freedom* are short, and the concluding narrative is written as if in one breath, without punctuation and ending on an unfinished sentence.

Edmund White gives his review of *A State of Freedom* as “A devastating portrait of poverty and the inhumanity of the rich to the poor. A masterpiece” (np) and A.M. Homes says, “A novel like no other- its prose is so rich, unequivocally precise and graceful . . . an immersive experience” (np). This thesis elaborates on Neel Mukherjee’s two novels *The Lives of Others* and *A State of Freedom*. The objectives of the study are, to introspect the themes of Marxism in the novels, to understand the class conflict in the society, to study the exploitation of the working class by the bourgeoisie and to bring out the alienation and the sufferings of the labourers.

The structure of the thesis is divided into five chapters. They are Introduction, Class Conflict: The Sphere of Separation, Degree of Exploitation and the Voice of the Oppressed, Marxian Phases of Alienation and Conclusion. This study reaffirms the importance of Marxism today and alarms the readers about the evils which continue to weaken the Indian society.

## **Chapter II**

### **Class Conflict: The Sphere of Separation**

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman a slave, patrician and plebian, Lord and serf, guild master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, that each time ended, either in the revolutionary reconstruction of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

- Karl Marx

The motto of Marxism is Liberty, Equality and Fraternity and its central idea is to ensure wellbeing to all the people in the society. But class system acts as an obstacle to the success of this philosophy plaguing the prosperous growth of the nation since time immemorial. The Marxian class theory states that the position of an individual, political and ideological, within a system of class and hierarchy, is determined by the process of production. According to the Marxian theory, the society is divided into three class structures namely the capitalists or the bourgeoisie, the landowners and the proletariats or the labourers.

The bourgeoisies are those who have control over production and wealth produced through it and the proletariats are those under the command of the bourgeoisie. The landowners are a group who live on their rent. One's property determine his class, and people with the same amount of wages are formally related to each other. Thus the landowners also fall into the category of the Bourgeoisie. It is a sad note that the society is not governed by the struggle among the classes but the disputes between different classes remain the reason for the Marxian class structure to be framed.

The rights and privileges of the labourers are curbed by the Bourgeoisie. The working hours of the labourers exceed the limited time but wages are refused for it. The Bourgeoisie has a vampire thirst for the increase in production. The chapter “Day and Night Work. The Relay System” in Karl Marx’s *Capital* states that,

. . . it was difficult for the workers to work all night and all day, so night shifts were introduced by the owners, not out of concern but to prevent any hindrance for production due to the physical exhaustion of labourers. From this article it is also seen that the workers were made to work alternatively in days and nights for alternate weeks. The workers were men and women, adults and children of both sexes. The ages of the children and youngsters run through all grades from 6 to 18. The shifts of the working hours pulled the high- blooded youth to work in cotton, steel, iron factories and other industries. The wild works done by children were terrible and truly dreadful. (178)

It is further stated in Karl Marx’s *Capital* that the absence of a worker from one shift was forcefully compensated by the worker from the other shift. The labourers had no proper food and slept on floor of the hot furnace with an apron underneath and a bit of a jacket. The labourers mostly under 18 worked for 12 hours and in the day and night sets, in factories and mills, in relays and forges without any gap or alteration. Children of 7 and of all intermediate ages before 13 years were dragged from their beds, early in the mornings at two, three or four o clock be it summer or winter and were forced to work for a bare subsistence till 12 at nights. *Capital* by Karl Marx gives many anecdotes on the toil of the labourers :

Mr J.Ellis one of the firms of Messrs John brown & co., steel and iron works, employing around 3000 men and boys, part of whose operations

namely iron and heavier steel work goes on night and day by relays, states 'that in the heavier steel work one or two boys are employed to a score or two men.' Their concern employees upward of 500 boys under 18, of whom about one third are 170 are under the age of 13. (180)

Because of such hard labour, the limbs of the little workers swayed dwindled, frames failed, their faces became pale and their humanity horribly sank beyond contemplation.

With reference to the proposed alteration of the law, Mr Ellis in *Capital* says,

I do not think it would be very objectionable to require that no person under the age of 18 should work more than 12 hrs in the 24. But we do not think that any line could be drawn over the age of 12, at which boys could be dispensed with for night work. We could be soon be prevented from employing boys under the age of 13 or even so high as 14, at all, than not be allowed to employ boys that we do have at night. Those boys who work in the day sets must take their turn in the night sets also, because the men could not work in the night sets only; it would ruin their health....(180)

Ellis adds on in *Capital* saying,

We think however that night work in alternate week is no harm.” (periodically changed night- labour might possibly do more harm than continual night- labour). “We find the men who do it, as well as the others who do other work only by day . . . Our objections to not allowing boys under 18 to work at night, would be on account of the increase of expense, but this is the only reason. We think that the increase would be more than the trade, with due regard to its being successfully carried out,

could fairly bear. Labour is scarce here, and might fall short if there were such a regulation. (180-181)

Thus, the modern industry contributed much to the death and disappearance of the economically weak individuals. Production constituted the structure of a society controlling the total social, intellectual, cultural and political life of an individual. The class polarization and homogenization increased the individual struggles as the wages were stolen from the workers and the employers were in good mind and it became a generalized one, material profits were valued higher than the needs of the common man. As a result, class conflict arose inside the phases of private factories and capitalism. India was not an exception to such a scenario.

It was the times when India was battling to win her own freedom as the British extracted the sweat out of the Indian proletariats. Though the Indian leaders were happy at the success of the revolution of socialism yet did not hold on to the ideals of socialism. Then prevailing poverty of the Indian lots and the exploitation of man by man, moved the youth of the country who had neither political nor financial assistance to adopt the ideals of socialism. The proletariats protested against the British but never thought the native bourgeoisie such as the princes, landlords, factory owners, money lenders would control the government and oppress them after the independence, not less than the British.

Socialists revolted for the national independence as well as for the liberation of the peasants and the workers. Their motif was to prevent the establishment of the bourgeoisie government and eradicate the class conscious strength of the capitalists. The revolutionaries strived to bring the dream of Utopian society come true. They were hungry for social justice which would wipe out the distinctions between the rich and the poor regulating equality in bread, shelter, transport and all other necessities. These

mass movements began in Indian colonies as the revolutionaries had stirred up the flames of wrath of the colonial people against the political leaders who always tried to lead them astray of the demands for survival, with their fake promises.

The socialists were imprisoned and tortured by the rivals or the bourgeoisie. In spite of the arrests, the revolutionaries continued to unfurl their banner of revolution and organized various programs calling for higher wages, the abolition of landlordism and usury, reduction of taxes and rents and absolute payment for their hard works. They also asked for education, health care, recognition of the unions and rights for strikes. Kiran Maitra in *Marxism in India: From Decline to Debacle* says, “Socialism cannot be achieved by merely ousting the capitalist class from its pre- eminent position, there will be a period of transition between the fall of capitalism and the establishment of socialism. The intervening period will not witness a free society” (266). True to this saying, class conflict and its evil impacts are still alive in the Indian soil. So having felt the importance to write about it, Neel Mukherjee in his works, has visually described the implications of Socialism and Marxism in India, majorly in Bengal and Calcutta since the neo-liberal era of 1960’s.

The author touches upon such Marxist issues in his novels and talks about the patriarchal zeal of India bringing out the connectivity between the Indian customs of religion and the divisions of classes. He presents to the readers a vivid pictography of how the Indian society was bound by the cords of displacement and distortion due to class consciousness. Exploring deep into the novels, one can experience the unquenchable fury, anxiety, rage and trauma which was painted by the class system on the Indian society with different shades, at different times.

Rose Tremain a reading fan of Mukherjee says of *A State of Freedom* as,

Neel Mukherjee's breath taking *A State of Freedom* is that rarest, most wonderful of things: a book both literarily dextrous, full of unforgettable scenes, images, language, and characters, as well as a furious, unsparing, clear eyed study of how a society's gross inequities of money and power demean and deform the human condition. The most astonishing and brilliant novel.... (np)

Neel Mukherjee's *The Lives of Others* documents the historical society of India, by recording the minute aspects of a bourgeoisie Indian Hindu family and demonstrates the troublesome effects of the boundary which they create between them and the Proletariats. It anatomises the soul of a nation as it unfolds a family history thereby unfolding the nation's history. Anita Desai appreciates this novel as, "A devastating portrayal of a decadent society and the inevitably violent uprising against it... It is ferocious, unsparing and brutally honest." (np).

The novels *A State of freedom* and *The Lives of Others* are witnesses to the colourful yet poverty - stricken society of India. *A state of Freedom* talks about an immigrant who visits Delhi, India with his foreign brought up son. In the opening passages, the author lists out the differences between the simple yet multi-layered aspects of India and the posh layer of the western society. The little boy finds many sign boards each one advertising each shop, and the wayfarers selling toys, snacks, books and magazines, rattles, whistles and other objects on platforms. It was new for the boy to see people clotting and swarming behind them begging and pestering them to buy the confectionaries.

The boy sees a rally of protestors on the road shouting slogans, it is an election rally. The boy also sees a man begging with a bear and he is scared to see both the creatures tap his car window begging for money and food. Later passages tell that this

sight is a nightmare to him. This highlights the prevailing inequality in the Indian society and the fact that the very means of livelihood of the proletariats is a nightmare un-imaginable to the Bourgeoise. The embarrassment, pity, horror and shame undergone by the proletariats behind the platform all manner of their odd jobs remain unseen to the bourgeoisie audience.

Mukherjee talks about the famine which burned the blood of the proletariat labourers. The labourers are treated as beasts by the landowners. They are not given their wages nor food. The poor labourers forget even the memory of water. They are pushed to the state of stealing the hay which is given to animals but when found guilty they are beaten worse than the animals. They go through pain, hunger and endless misery. Such brutal reign of the bourgeoisie over the proletariats makes them kill themselves.

The author gives a dull and unsettled shade to the infrastructure of the Indian monuments in *A State of Freedom*: “they passed some ruined cloisters, then a triple-arched inner gateway, solidly restored and slightly further from it, a big domed building that was awaiting restoration work” (8). From the novel it is evident that even since the time of Akbar, the ruling class fancied the shows performed by slaves at the throw of the dice. The ruling class entertained themselves at the wild oppression of the proletariats.

The bourgeoisie or the factory owners possess the thirst for wealth and production and cheat the workers without paying them duly. This injustice has agitated the workers and resulted in labour unrest and unionism. The left party is arming strong and the Communist Party or the CPI(M) is in the state of gaining power. The proletariats are trampled yet they stand up, shouting on the roads, demanding the break of the bourgeoisie’s cuffs on them.

Ralf Dahrendorf a Marxist critic and writer has classified the society into two as the command class and obey class in his *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*. He classifies the approaches towards them as the Utopian and the rationalist. In his view of class, he says that the class grants one the power of position and authority to take control over others. Ralf tells how class acts as the power structure of the society is dichotomous granting authoritative hierarchy to one section of class excluding, subjugating and dominating the other one.

Giving Ralf's insight to Mukherjee's novels, it is seen how the Utopian atmosphere in India, is unachieved due to the subjugation of the powerful class over the workers and peasants. According to the words of the author, the bourgeoisie in Bombay live in posh flats while the proletariats live in slums in the shores. The slums consist temporary huts which have not the facility of toilets. People living there piss on the street corners, take bath in the rock pools, wash their clothes on the rocky surface of the pools. The slums have huts made out of plastic roofs and their surrounding is prone to plagues such as cholera, TB, malaria, dysentery, etc.

The huts on the sand would not stand the storm or flood and their habitats would be pulled to the roads on any alarms of natural calamities. They do not own even the six feet ground which belongs to every human being by nature. The corpses of the proletariats are not taken for cremation but are allowed to bloat and decay by the shores or left as prey for animals. The slums have water supply only during fixed hours and the people there stand in queues for long hours to fill water in containers. Most of the people who live in the slums are men servants and maids of the bourgeoisie. Those servants will be psychologically and physically punished with harsh words and embarrassment if they are late to their works.

The Proletariats have to sell their self- respect and dignity to their masters; they are not allowed to call their masters addressing them with singular nouns even if they are younger to them and they were allowed to answer them back. They are trained to hide themselves in the corners before the Bourgeoise. It is even more sad to note that most of the people in slums are under scheduled and have lost their lands and properties to the bourgeoise manufacturers and corporates under the command of the corrupt politicians and bureaucracies.

*The Lives of Others* portrays that the rich class who live in emperor buildings which have swimming pools, marbles and glasses, gardens and lawns and flowers and enjoy the life of restaurants, ballrooms and bars. In contrary, down the arcades of the posh hotels, people clot on the platforms:

lying on their gamchha, a jute sack, a piece of tarpaulin or plastic or whatever scrap of cloth they can spare after wrapping their bodies. . . curled up like foetuses. Those who have sandals use them as pillows, otherwise they will be stolen. Those who don't, do without, resting their heads on the concrete. Their vests are full of holes, they wear dirty, threadbare lungis that ride up while they are asleep, exposing their shame to the world, . . . (32)

The bourgeoisies worry over the fluctuation in their profit out of production while the proletariats died out of hunger in spite of taking up odd jobs such as pulling rickshaws, selling balloons, selling snacks, digging ditches, carrying bricks, cement, stones etc., for construction. In the absence of vacancies for such jobs, the proletariats begged. This is the destiny of the proletariats for generations, as they never have an opportunity to educate their children. On one side the oppressed are continued to be oppressed but on the other side food riots erupt everywhere around the city.

*A State of Freedom* portrays the lives of the cooks who work for the bourgeoisie. They prepare mouth-watering rich dishes for them such as rice, vegetables, fish etc., but carry only the leftover food of their masters to fill the stomachs of their families. To add pain to the wound, the bourgeoisie sometimes falsely accuse their slaves of stealing, and beat them in public trying to extract the confession for an uncommitted sin, when they have no clues for the missing of their objects. At rare cases, some merciful masters permit their servants to stay in their kitchen late in the nights when the servants are on streets due to disasters. But it is out of the cultural trend of the Indian bourgeoisie to empathize with the servants: “God knows, the people who have domestic help don’t exactly treat them as their equals. Ufff, this “equals” business again. . . . You don’t understand the culture here, you shouldn’t come trampling in with your fancy notions. There will be difficulty for us to clean up afterwards” (78). The young students turned out to be recalcitrant protestors asking for jobs. They stand up resisting the hike in price level and the violence against the peasants. Chhatra Parishad (CP), a students’ political wing is formed and imprisonment for protesting is deemed an honour by the members of that party. Though there are numerous battles and strikes, no change is accomplished. The leaders of the CPI(M) try to make peaceful talks with the members of the party and when it does not work out, Naxalbari is born.

The protestors work in private and even throw bombs on the coffeehouses of the politicians. In this novel, Moneylenders, landowners, coal and iron companies and other steel manufacturers take over the lands of the tribes. The naxalbaries go to rural areas and organize people to fight against the aristocratic haughtiness.

The naxalbaries function to help them who are reduced to slavery. The fighters have four aims, one is to form squads in villages to overthrow the bourgeoisie, second is to seize the weapons from the police and other class rivals which stood as symbols for

their authority, third is to seize the crops from the landowners and fourth is to propagate the politics of armed struggle. Few factories like the light bulb factories are shut for more than three years due to strikes. The strikes do not come to conclusion as the labourers actually have no access to the employers but to the intermediaries called managers. Youngsters from all around the country, who go through the same spectrum of joblessness and financial crisis are united as naxalbaries.

Neel Mukherjee portrays the struggles of factory workers and farmers. He says that the farmers who cultivate crops have nothing to eat and beg alms out of shame for their livelihood. The landowners demand profit of more than what they give. So, the farmers have to get loans for the purpose of cultivation. When there is no expected outcome, the landowners take even the small scrap of the farmers' lands. Moneylenders do not leave them even the land but grab them, henceforth many farmers commit suicide. The author depicts the pathetic condition of farmers in this novel.

They work from six in the morning till four in the evening like machines. They are made to work like techno humans without a mind and soul; but are unpaid. The farmers who ought to receive hundred rupees each day, received only three rupees as wages. Farmers have no money even to buy seeds. In future will famine and poverty remain as unwelcomed guests of the weaker classes. The middle class people have lost their patience and begun to loot ration shops and the fate of the oppressed class is more savage and horrible. Sometimes people have nothing to eat and only drink water sharing with neighbours. They do not fast and have a half meal of cooked guard and mashed yam, once in a day. People in the rural areas become half naked due to malnutrition. Neel Mukherjee in *The Lives of Others*, states the poverty of people as,

It is true that rural people eat a lot of rice, . . .they eat rice because there isn't much rice to eat: the vegetables they grow; the roots and

leaves they forage; the occasional fish from the ponds and canals; the even rare duck, which sometimes appears on the flooded rice fields during the early part of the growing season . . . they are filling themselves up against the time they know will come when they won't even have this staple to fill their stomachs. (175)

He also adds that, “a woman lying dead on a narrow side- street and a crow pecking out her eyes, while her child, near dead with hunger watched the scene. . . . in the hope of getting food in the city and had died like flies on the roads” (126). Apart from the farmers and factory workers the domestic servants have also undergone a different kind of trauma. They are beaten by their masters and they even shed blood. The children of the bourgeoisie family dominate and disrespect the proletariats regardless of their age. This is evident from Somnath's behavior in *The Lives of Others*.

*A State of Freedom* and *The Lives of Others* have the aura of women writing. Women are considered a separate class and women from all walks of life are abused by the male class. The masters take advantage over the maids and abuse them. The tribal women are seen as objects of sex and the people from the higher class forcefully abuse them. Another group of proletariats, sell their body for money taking up whoredom as their profession. Even then the bourgeoisie men treated them as animals.

Education remains unreachable to the children in the villages. This is portrayed through the character of Milly. Though the schools are under developed, the one square meal offered in the school has made all the children make their presence in the schools. The little children are excited at the new toilets which are built in the schools. The villagers send their children to far places to work as domestic servants. The pain and anguish of a little child, parting with her family to earn cannot shake the emotional level of the readers. In the houses of their employees the beautiful innocence and ignorance

of childhood is seen as a crime. Milly undergoes a lot of struggles as a servant. The proletariat children are cursed to carry the burden of the world right before they come out of their infant days.

In *A State of Freedom*, there is a group of social workers called 'Samaj Sewi' who help the village folk with medical care. Samaj Sewi's has created awareness among the villagers and boosted them to ask for their rights. Here, it is to be marked that the rural people have no money even for medical checkups and treatment and due to all these reasons, many of them prepare themselves to face death. In addition to all the wild atrocities, the bourgeoisie moneylenders are bloody and torture the loan takers beyond imagination. They come to the villages, drag people out of their houses and never hesitate even to kill them; they also threaten the families of the respective money taker. Milly's brother Budhuwa is affected by them. His mother pleads them to leave her son: "Please let him go, he's my son, please, I'm falling at your feet, please spare him, let him go" (166).

The rural women who work in the far districts and states are caged slaves inside their masters' houses. They are not allowed to leave even the gate at any cause. They are abused in a way and the rural women who go inside the jungle to carry woods are abused in a different way. They become preys to the lust of the forest officers who have sold the villagers' lands to the corporate and the governing body for money. Soni's sister becomes the victim in the hands of the forest officers.

Villages have been polluted, the politicians' hypocrisy comes out. Most of the people, even girls realize this and join the Communist Party. They choose to live their lives inside the jungles, hoping that the society would change someday. They are ready to sacrifice all sorts of relation for the sake of liberation. But it is assumed that some

from the CPI actually help the government sharing with them the secret missions of the party. The villagers are caught between the CPI and the government.

The proletariat men take up all sorts of menial jobs like Bear dancing, construction etc. These people find it difficult to feed the animal as they themselves have nothing to eat. Bear dancing is banned yet for livelihood people take up this and travel miles. Still the greed of the bourgeoisie continues to haunt them in the form of bribes and fines. Neel Mukherjee says that the proletariats work in construction sites not mind their lives but to exist. The buildings are illegally built to greater heights which has made the workers lose their lives while working at the peaks. Ramlal works as a construction worker and he feels that, “he has never seen anywhere are the laws and who thinks of laws when the mazdoors are nothing their lives less than nothing” (274). He falls down when he coughs and dies. The only reward of the proletariats’ death is bribe given as a token of gratitude to the officers by the bourgeoisie for not having filed any cases against them.

The proletariats due to famine feed only on rice, watery dal, a little bit of fried greens, some days only puffed rice, water rice with chillies and salt and when they have no food rats and snakes in dry fields became their diet and dysentery becomes their close companion. The city life and its hectic work crushed the labourers to death, they had to work without food. Drought, famine, death and failure become their songs of life while accumulation of wealth, giving in marriages and celebration of feasts are the serious discussion of the bourgeoisie.

The proletariats have no more strength even to starve for hunger, they wait for their souls to leave their bodies. They are triggered by the revolutionaries and have joined them and revolted against the aristocrats. They loot the houses of the bourgeoisie but are caught by the police. The police not only torture the workers but their family

too. The police go in to the villages searching for the revolutionaries, as they do not know as of how to begin the enquiry, directly ransack the poor villagers' homes and hitting everyone even little children. The revolutionaries pledge to live a life not a kind of death and but a life of endless fights demanding selflessness and generosity so that their children could lead a better life and taste the fruits of their hands.

Classes are relationships of power and authority based on property ownership. A class brings together people with same virtues and is antagonistic by nature in its interests. The growth of the classes and the development of the struggles between them in a modern society, establishes the social relations. According to Neel Mukherjee the idea of power and reign is the key instrument of class conflict. Production is considered to be power and from then onwards class has become a political tool and class conflicts turn out to be proletarian revolutions demanding societal change.

Marcuse in *Contemporary Marxist Theory* points out, "The culture of souls absorbed in a false form those forces and wants which could find no place in everyday life." (383). So are the proletariat souls governed unjustly by the Bourgeoisie.

### **Chapter III**

#### **Degree of Exploitation and the Voice of the Oppressed**

The difference between rich and poor..., is that the poor do everything with their own hands and the rich hire hands to do things.

- Betty Smith

The above stated lines portray an honest and a simple picture of inequality and oppression in India. As Walter Allen says in his *Reading a Novel* "Novels are the

mirror of age, but a very special kind of mirror, a mirror that reflects not merely the external features of the age but also its inner face, its nervous system, coursing of its blood and the unconscious promptings and conflicts which sway it" (18-19). Literature is the best form of a truthfully recorded medium of the society. Indian novels have always succeeded in being the mirrors of the societal ambiance at all times.

Indian Marxist writing brings out the human nature, nature of a community and the nature of a social entity. Thus literature has become an essential part of an individual's life in India. Indian writing acts as the manifestation of all forms of lives in India. Indian writing illuminates the depths of the society and brings out man's thoughts and emotions in an extra-ordinary way. So, most of the Indian realist writers adopt the theme of backwardness, as it emphasizes the abstraction of their works in a better way among the readers. The touch of backwardness, lays the crux of Indian Marxist writing, amalgamating different expressions of sufferings behind it.

Indian Marxist writing is a conglomeration of different phases of backward exploitation, exposing the tribal problems, peasant societies and industrial issues. According to *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, it is "the story of the struggles of men and women to free themselves from certain forms of exploitation and oppression"(xii). Indian Marxist fiction brings out how inequality and backwardness prevail and absolutely dominate the Indian society under the proletariat consciousness. The Marxist writing can also be called as exploitation fiction, as it narrates the loss of human semblance due to social and economic exploitation of the proletariats by the bourgeoisie. Such writings explain how the Bourgeoisie attitude looks down upon the proletariats, never considering them as humans, which thenceforth leads to physical and mental exploitation of the proletariats, frustrating and dejecting them.

Through the Marxist aspects in Indian English writing, it is clearly understood that backwardness exists in the nation because the bourgeoisie sustain themselves by the sweat of the proletariats. The proletariats are not given the production of their own labour and are paid very less. These workers, who are denied their right to property by the ruling class, are forced to sustain themselves only with the leavings of their masters. This class consciousness pushes India back from being a socially developed country as there is constant strife between the bourgeoisie and the proletariats.

Regarding the exploitation of the oppressed, Karl Marx in his *The Communist Manifesto* says,

The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors,' and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, callous 'cash payment.' It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom — Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation. (np)

As quoted above, the patriarchal class system compels a proletariat to abolish his own dignity, loose himself to the imperative emancipation of the bourgeoisie altogether making his life deprived and abominable. The bourgeoisie deviate from the social norms set by the democracy of India leading to a problem between humans

which threatens and challenges the peaceful development of a society. Increase in unemployment, job insecurity, unfair wages, destruction of care and welfare services make the living conditions of the proletariats sub human, endowing upon them persistent sadness, disparity, anxiousness and a vacant mind.

Proletariats from rural backgrounds are even more cursed. Most of the people in a village or rustic area are both directly and indirectly dependent on agriculture and the basic means of earning is farming. The landowners who hold the properties take the farmers or coolies for granted and extract their blood from them during the field work. The stain of class consciousness in India has achieved a position for itself in the minds of the nation which is difficult to be removed.

In modern industries too, the labourers are paid less with a remark that they lack efficiently to work with technology. Altogether as a cyclic process, the proletariats are continued to be trampled by the bourgeoisie. They do not pay the workers properly as a result of which his generation lack educational skills. Due to the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie the proletariat generation lacks even the basic nourishment and they suffer out of malnutrition. The community of the working- class people is made to stay away from participating in any social programs and they are made to believe that they are worthless and underserving creatures.

In this modern society, there still exists indifference and lack of sympathy for the proletariats. For the farmers, there is lack of legislation in preventing the tribal lands from becoming nontribal lands. The annual income of a farmer is lower than an IT sector. Replacement of manual labourers with farming equipment, make the economic condition of a landless farmer even more pushing him to commit suicide. Agricultural lands have turned to lands yielding sugar canes and cotton filling the government's

treasury. Agricultural exports from India have increased while starvation has increased inside the country.

*Publishers Weekly* has published an article under the headline: “Neel Mukherjee on Displacement and Desire”, in which writer Neel Mukherjee says that the country’s constitution is “an incredibly progressive document where all caste division and discrimination are unconstitutional” (np). But he feels that this scenario has failed in the reality and he says, “I feel very bleak about India and Indian life, particularly at this point in history, when it’s turning into a religious, nationalist, right-wing society” (np). He also adds saying,

I feel bleak about its prospects, and I’m not a cheerful happy writer. To write about India truthfully one has to face these issues. One cannot write about either the exotic side of things or the *Slumdog Millionaire* side of things. I’ve always felt you have to deal with it all with as much honesty and truthfulness as you can without spinning it off into some kind of escapism or colourfulness or chitchat. (np)

Covering the dark aspects of Humanity’s exploitation with regard to class system in India, Neel Mukherjee has penned down two novels *A State of Freedom* and *The Lives of Others*, which date back to the immediate post independent era. In *A State of Freedom*, Mukherjee covers up the sufferings of maids, domestic maids, street dancers, construction workers and other labourers who do menial jobs to attain life’s basic sustainability. The author also brings in the theme of feminism and gender conflict by talking about how women are abused in their work places.

In his *The Lives of Others*, the author talks about how the patriarchal class system adds to the part of class distinction. *The Lives of Others* emphasizes the thickness of the marginal line between the bourgeoisie and the proletariats through the

partaking of Supratik, a son from a bourgeoisie background, in political activism against his own class. The fortunes and the entire livelihood of his bourgeoisie family take a disastrous turn after his departure. In the article “Neel Mukherjee on Displacement and Desire” in the *Publishers Weekly*, Neel Mukherjee on his *The Lives of Others* says, “ I don’t know whether my book started life as the story of a joint family in Calcutta at a critical juncture in history or as a reckoning with an era because the origin lies far earlier. It was as if the book had already been there, waiting patiently to be let in; I only had to open the door” (np).

Characters of a work, through their voices give life to the ideas of an author, communicate on his behalf to the audience and thereby become the manifestation of artist’s conception. Super exploitation and discrimination against the working class ‘temporary workers’ take place under capitalism. Women are generally undervalued due to gender and are paid less wages. Neel Mukherjee in his novels projects how the burden of humiliation are carried by racial minority people or the proletariats as they fall prey to the pride, cruelty, and selfishness of the bourgeoisie.

*A State of freedom* talks about suppression of the characters suppressed at different stages of their lives. The novel opens with an NRI visiting India with his son. The boy finds it difficult to breathe the air of poverty in India. The Indian father, who got used to the bourgeoisie lifestyle, feels very uncomfortable and fears that the violent and dirty scenario of poor people might trouble his son. Both father and son are stuck up in traffic due to the death of a construction worker, there is a rally of unrest and there are lots of people begging and selling in the platform. The boy sees a beggar who says, “Babu, my child is hungry, hasn’t eaten for four days” (9). Her child looks shrivelled with matted hair, her sore at the corner of her mouth is surrounded by flies. The beggars are crippled and are appalled with pity, shame and embarrassment.

The NRI boy also sees the paintings of kings and servants stand in the order of service in Akbar's palace and the portraits in which the heads of the birds on the trees are destroyed and the crouching animals have been defaced. There is also another child whose lower half is decapitated during the act of squatting which refers to ancient ritual sacrifices. These incidents give the readers a clue that since age old days, the servants have been tortured and the children and adults who belong to the working class might have been offered as sacrifices. The injured animals and birds are the symbols of the people affected by the bourgeoisie. The poor state of the oppressed class of the country has been painted well in this part of the novel. The author tries to bring out the difference between the posh, western lifestyle of the Bourgeoisie and the hungry days of the needy.

To emphasize the fact that poverty is one of the major aspects of exploitation in India, Neel Mukherjee begins *The Lives of Others*. Nitai Das is a farmer who is affected by drought. One day he sits withered in the lifeless ground which has turned to be his greatest enemy. The ground is not soil anymore but only dust as it has lost the memory of water. He is half dead because of hunger his cursed fate has given him the responsibility of sustaining his family too. His three little children have not eaten for five days and their last meal was a handful of hay which was stolen from the landlord's cowshed. His family boils the hay in the cloudy yellow water from the well.

After five days of starvation, Nitai begs for one cup of rice in his landlord's house but all that he receives is abuse and forcible ejection. One of Nitai Das' landlord's guards beat him with a stick while the other says, "Where are you going to hit this dog? He is nothing but bones, we don't even have to hit him. Blow on him and he'll fall back" (2). He falls down there like a corpse but suddenly a new energy makes

him walk. This evidently throws light on how the proletariats are being treated like beasts and are trained, tamed and exploited by the upper class.

Nitai who is rejected and thrown away by his master becomes helpless and walks towards his wife and children who have been awaiting his return with something to eat. His wife is not even able to lift up her head because of starving. His children have stopped crying too as they have lost the energy for that action of grief also. Moreover Nitai has been forced by his landlord that he should pay the interest of the first loan but Nitai is in total misery. In the beginning of the drought Nitai's family has "hunger and hope" but finally only "hope and pain" (2) remained.

Nitai who comes with a new but different energy takes a short-handled sickle and brings it across her neck. Without delaying he does the same thing to his children. He chases them like animals and kills them. When his little girl tries to cry and runs away, he goes behind her catches hold of her, and strangles her throat to death and finally he himself commits suicide. This throws light on the injustice endured by the labourers and their helplessness to revolt against their masters. Thus the death, agony and grief of poverty due to class mobilisation is well expressed through the character Nitai Das' story by Neel Mukherjee.

The lifestyle of the proletariats remains a nightmare to the bourgeoisie while their living is a dream of longing for the proletariats. There lies a vast gap, unable to be bridged between the upper and the lower class. In *A State of Freedom*, the author uses an animal imagery of a bear called Raju. The NRI boy from America sees Raju dancing on the streets for earning. This appears strange to him and he is taken aback to see the bear beg with its stretched arms. This picture threatens the boy and that night, he sees nightmares of the bear, and about the death of the construction worker which he witnessed that same morning. He falls sick seeing the lives on streets in India.

Neel Mukherjee talks about the dull life of the working class, who take up menial jobs. In this novel with the scene of the NRI, the author has also set an opening to the bloodshed of a construction worker which is seen on road by the little NRI boy. This proves how the blood of the working class is truly sucked by the greed of bourgeoisie land owners. Such stone heartedness and cruelty of the bourgeoisie towards the working class, is explained by Neel Mukherjee.

In *A State of Freedom* in which the narrator talks about the suffering of a twelve- year old servant in his house. One day the temperature of the sun has nearly touched more than forty degrees and the narrator's father sends that little girl out with barren foot to buy small red batteries from the general store but the girl is so timid that she does not know to ask for the right ones and by mistake has brought bigger ones. Immediately the narrator's father, shouts at her, throws the packet to the wall and abuses her pointing out that she has no sense. He sends her back again the third time in the temperature which could change humans into vapour and then the little girl's chin quivers out of fear. The girl sits not even for a second, but runs in the streets because of the unbearable heat. Even animals are not on the streets at that hot period except this little angel.

Seeing the girl breathe heavily, the narrator himself takes sympathy for the girl and suggests his father to write down in a paper, the needed product for which the master says the shopkeeper will not read. It is past lunch time but he sends her again, unfortunately the maid is unable to get the right ones even this time. The master groans, scrunches up his face and bares his teeth and is trying to utter foul language, had not his wife stopped him, he would have physically harmed that girl. The anxiety the girl goes through is explained as,

The girl out of fear could no longer check her tears. There was no restraint to it- she sobbed and hiccupped as she cried. Her knees bent and I couldn't tell if she wanted to sit down and cry because it would be easier, or if she wanted to fall to my mother's or father's feet and beg to be excused from being sent out again. I could hear my own blood pumping away furiously. (44)

The narrator is totally unhappy with his father's behaviour; with all his anger he tries to punch his father for his brutality but he is stopped by his mother's scream. The narrator's empathy towards the servant girl makes him a criminal in his father's eye, who has crossed over to the wrong side of "us versus them" (45), an equation drawn between the bourgeoisie and the proletariats. He is chided by his father that he, after all his expensive education must not carry with him such Gandhian type of fancy posturing (45). Empathy, soft corner or being informal with a proletariat is seen as an offence according the custom of the bourgeoisie. The difference in their social class has prevented the bourgeoisie from getting engaged with their labourers and servants in any way, except from paying them their salary.

The narrator gives additional information about the exploitation of the servants by narrating an incident from his childhood. During a street walk with his mother, the narrator saw a group a people beating a man who was accused of stealing money and jewellery in the public. They were trying to extract from him a confession of his stealing. Not only his masters but the entire bourgeoisie lot in that area had surrounded him punishing him severely even before they acknowledged the truth and extremely tortured him:

At one point . . . someone lifting him by his ankles and swinging him around in a circle, his head so close, during each revolution, to a pile of

jagged, broken bricks that repeatedly hit that mound, tearing open his forehead and the back of his head. He shrieked every time the collision happened, and I saw blood on his face. (58)

The man cried telling he did not even touch anything but he was unheard by the bourgeoisie who poured out all their outrage on him. This was the barbarous action of the bourgeoisie against the law and constitution of the country. Even today such incidents take place but are hidden under the carpet because of corrupted judiciary.

Apart from physical abuse and violence, the proletariats are mentally abused. Humiliation and untouchability go hand in hand with the oppressed class. This can be realised from the anecdote of Renu a cook in *A State of Freedom*. She works for the narrator's household, her appearance is described as "impassive and unimpressed" (37) and she has a tin recorder kind of shrieky voice. It is seen that Renu works for six homes, twelve or fourteen hours a day.

At one occurrence, Renu asks her Punjabi mistress to soon tell her what should be cooked, but here there is a reference made to her that "the subordination in her words would otherwise be intolerable" (38) and in few other cases, it is unacceptable by her master's son that she answers back her mistress. This shows the domination of the bourgeoisie which curbed even the freedom of speech from the proletariats. The other servant Milly is a washerwoman in the same family who is pregnant but suffers out of hunger and malnutrition. As a mother, she has no strength to even breast feed her child, but on the other hand her masters demand only Bengali cuisine and waste so much food. Servants in the upper- class houses looked and are treated like walking corpses without even a speck of humaneness for them, while the bourgeoisie enjoy all comforts out of their labourers' sweat but still humiliate and degrade them.

In *A State of Freedom*, Milly, a rural girl adds to the point of servant's mental harassment and physical abuse. Flashing back to her history, Milly is a person enjoying her childhood in the farms and forests with her friends. She and her friends go to their village's government school for the sake of free meals they receive there. One day her brother meets with an accident after which she is sent to work as a maid in Dumri. Milly an eight- year old girl has to travel eight hours from her village, for two hundred per month because her family is in desperate need of money. Her dream of education is shattered.

At first Milly is happy and feels excited that she is going to see a new world but she is baffled and her heart fails when she is told by her mother that she would not return home but stay there to work. She has to accept it for the cause of her injured brother. Milly understands the "weight of the world" (173). It is the beginning of her days of sorrow: "There were no good byes, no sorrows, no expectations . . . no exchange of tokens or mementoes" (172) among her friends and family.

Milly starts working for Mr. Lewis' family who gives her two meals a day counting the morning tea and stale chapatti. Milly loves to go through Lewis' daughter Vinti's books but Mrs. Lewis never gives her time for that. Milly tries to memorize few words from Vinti's books and says it to herself frequently. Seeing this Mrs. Pendo Lewis angrily asks, "Do You know that speaking to yourself is a sign of madness? Do we want a mad girl on our hands? What are you doing with Vinti's book? You don't know how to read" (186). Milly is humiliated, insulted, her dignity is brought down and above all her independence is snatched from her. It is said every woman has a mother inside her but the bourgeoisie's blood will not be compassionate for the seed of the proletariats.

The generation of the bourgeoisie develops dominion and mercilessness towards the proletariat right from their childhood. Vinti abuses and fights with Milly for having touched her books. She enjoys complaining Milly to her mom to make her receive scolding and punishments. Yet Milly learns to work patiently for the rare gift of two meals she received there. In her home eating one meal was difficult and at times her family will not have even that due to the lack of chulha.

The humiliation and failing of emotions and feelings at her mistress' house seemed better to Milly than starve to death out of hunger at her home. Milly's mother would then say, "The pangs of hunger are great pangs, it's a burning. God gave us stomachs to punish us" (188). Her father is a drunkard and they have converted to Christianity as the clergy has promised them a big sack of rice and free schooling for Milly in the big towns. Dreaming of her child getting a government employment because of the big schools, her mother agrees for the conversion ceremony but the dreams and aspirations of the oppressed people too are downtrodden along with them.

Exploitation sets a barrier even to the dreams of the oppressed. Milly who dreamed of achieving high, ended up washing vessels as a slave. One day, while washing china cups, Milly breaks the handle of a cup for which Mrs. Lewis calls her "clumsy pagal" (191). When Milly breaks Vinti's terracotta doll Mrs. Pendo tries to punish Milly in front of her daughter. After working there for four years, she moves to Jamshedpur to work for a Bengali couple.

Milly's salary is increased but she is altogether in a new atmosphere. Hillary Mayell in "India's "Untouchables" Face Violence, Discrimination" says, "India's untouchables are relegated to the lowest jobs, and live in constant fear of being publicly humiliated, paraded naked, beaten, and raped with impunity by upper-caste ... seeking to keep them in their place" (np). True to this saying, Milly faces higher level of

exploitation in her new mistress' hands. Pratima, Milly's mistress subjugates, subdues Milly and tries to keep her under the cell of oppression. Pratima makes her work very hard and grudges her even during her leisure time. She would scold her saying, "Standing at the window again? Don't you have work to do?" If Milly answers her back saying that she has finished her chores, Pratima's ego is touched and she asks, "How dare you answer back?" (199) and then she would unnecessarily add works which are out of the usual schedule just to keep Milly engaged all the time. Pratima makes sure that Milly takes no naps in the afternoon.

At Pratima's house, Milly makes beds for her master and mistress but is not allowed to sit on it. Untouchability, though a very old concept is another form of exploitation. Milly is asked to use a separate broom to dust the parts of the bed which her body has touched. She is not allowed to sit on the chairs or sofas but either sit or stand to watch television. Though she sits on the furniture during the absence of her master and mistress she dutifully dusts the places where she touched, with separate brooms. Even while Milly sits on the floor, Pratima rudely instructs her not to lean on the wall or the furniture.

Pratima is a lady who believes that servants will sit on head if allowed to indulge in watching television or in anything that they enjoy (202). She understands Milly's curiosity to watch serials. Soon Pratima curbs the freedom of entertainment from Milly. Pratima does not allow Milly to touch the things inside the cupboards but if they are dusty she would blame Milly for which Milly has learnt not to answer back.

Milly is provided with two old plates for eating and a plastic beaker for water. She has to use the toilet and bathrooms which are down the floors in the car parking ground. She is paid five times higher than what she received in Jamshedpur but later she realises that in her new working place, she is the only maid doing all the jobs cooking,

washing etc., but is actually paid less for all her works. Milly has to clean fragile products but they are too delicate for a little girl like Milly to handle. There is a crack in one of those products. Pratima physically abuses her by slapping Milly hard and says that everything she breaks big or small would come of her wages. It is not just a threat but Pratima truly deducts money from Milly's wages.

In the new house in the flats, Milly faces all kinds of exploitation such as low wages, untouchability, isolation, etc., above all, Milly is under house arrest. She is never allowed to go out of the flat's gate for any reason. Milly earns to do window shopping, she desperately craves for food in the streets, she wishes to see the cars and other vehicles in the traffic but the watchmen are instructed by the bourgeoisie masters that no maid servants should cross the gate premises for anything. Milly does not understand the seriousness at first but is shocked and dismayed but she is just a servant and has no right to question, argue or oppose.

During the absence of her employers, Milly speaks to a snack vendor who walks through their lane sharply at five o'clock, through the window. Gradually, both of them develop a liking for each other and first communicate through eyes and she longs to go down to see him. Unfortunately, she is a caged bird, imprisoned, trapped and squeezed. Milly has lost her own space under the sky. She thinks that her house in the village is not as small as the Mumbai flat in which she works. Intense loneliness troubles her and she is broken by the sense of desolation. She keeps calling Sabina for help but she could do nothing. Sabina tells Milly about a ten- year old servant boy in Kolkata, who was thrown into the lifts hole from the eighth floor by his mistress as a punishment. She was rich and the police closed the case telling that the boy was an illiterate who without knowing to operate the lift fell down. Sabina asks Milly to be happy that atleast she is not that boy.

Nine years have passed, discomfit saddened her spirit. She tries to escape by slipping out of through the shutters of the window but she get stuck one day when she tried to put her leg out and “she peed with fear and anxiety and felt even more ashamed” (231); her skin on the thigh tore and her pain was irrelevant but she was happy to pay that price of pain than to be locked up. She is obsessed with the thought of freedom, she wakes up in the midnights seeking for any openings in the house through which she could escape. She tries to widen the indentations in the house but it is not successful and ends up fearing if her mistress would find the blading works Milly has made.

Due to the frustration, Milly hurts herself by biting her arms, sinking her teeth in, cutting her fingers under a cold running tap, tears up clumps of her hair with the idea that if she maims herself she would be taken to hospitals but she could not leave without her passbook which is with her mistress. Milly gets a new idea that if she works imperfectly she would be chased out. So, she starts to cook worse. Unexpectedly, her mistress “forced Milly to eat all the ruined food in one sitting, shoving her fist full of food into Milly’s mouth when she could no longer ingest anything” (233). Milly’s mistress warns her saying, “I’ll punish you so badly that you will be screaming for help, and there won’t be a soul on earth who will lift a finger to help you. Next time you think of such tricks, remember, I’ll brand your face with a hot iron, you’ll be marked for life. How would that feel?” (234) Milly loses hope, when she tells her mistress that her father passed away, she replies Milly that she lies and restricts her from going.

When Sabina, Milly’s friend talks to Pratima about approaching the police against her, she boldly asks Sabina to go ahead. She is confident that her money would prevent her from being charged. Sabina has instructed Milly not to give her mobile phones to her mistress and luckily with the help of Binay, the vendor for whom Milly has a liking Milly manages to come out of the flat during the absence of her mistress’

household. It had taken one week for Milly to explain her story to Binay over the phone. Then Binay along with his friend, dressed as furniture delivery men come to the flat and make her go inside the cupboard and escape from the house.

Milly makes sure that she has taken her ration card with her which would prove that the account is hers. This is the plight of domestic workers. They are paid less, curbed all freedom, tortured mentally and physically and were made slaves. The workers are not permitted to go out. Because the bourgeoisie masters fear that the proletariats may break into a revolution against them if they are allowed to explore the world or communicate with each other.

The proletariats are addressed by the bourgeoisie as people with low degree of knowledge and uncivilised. The working class people are never allowed to climb the ladder of improving their skills for the convenience of the bourgeoisie to hold superiority over them. This is evident from the narrator's visit to Renu's house who is a servant at his house. The narrator visits his cook Renu's village once during his tour against his parents will but there he is received with all hospitality. His luggage is carried by the sons of the family and Raja the older brother says of his arrival as, "how kind you to bring the dust of your feet into the hut of the poor" (69). Renu's family treats the guest (narrator) like God. Since ancient times, the bourgeoisie are made to believe that they are worthless and undeserved to talk about education. Their house is too small yet they live in joint family. Here it is proven that the so called uncivilised people live in unity but the bourgeoisie or the civilised ones of the society treat humans like beasts. This incident highlights the inequality in the social standards.

To show that the proletariats are no different from beasts to the bourgeoisie, Neel Mukherjee uses animal imagery in *A State of Freedom*. Lakshman is a poor man who has no clue of living means. He who is baffled by his fate of poverty, has no

earning but is responsible for his family as well as his brother Ramlal's who has gone to the city to be a construction worker. Lakshman's and Ramlal's children do not sleep in the nights due to hunger. One day Lakshman finds a bear cub in the street where people offer the animal on the ground, a mixture of bread, water and roti. They use a stick to mix the food and forced the Bear to eat but it remains silent, trembling and uninterested. This Bear can be said to be a shadow of the working- class people, who are treated as untouchables by the bourgeoisie.

Lakshman hears that the cub must have been left behind by some qalandar then makes up his mind to earn money with the Bear cub. There is no enough space for the members of the family themselves so the Bear cub is confined to a box and has been kept outside. After few months Salim, a qalandar arrives and Lakshman plans to train the boy cub for bear dancing which is banned by the government. The police who has left the bourgeoisie criminals uncharged would punish the poor folks with fine and seven years of imprisonment if caught guilty of Bear dancing. But he decides to carry it out in the outskirts.

The cub undergoes the preparation for its dance performance. A fire is lit with kindling and, after it catches properly, one end of a long iron rod is inserted in the fire. A rope lubricated with mustard oil is kept ready on one side. Four men turn the cub on its back and hold down its paws forcefully. A thick stick is put into the cub's mouth and the animal moves its head maniacally: "With four quick but forceful taps using a shorter stick, Salim knocks out the cub's canine teeth" (98). To add to the injury of the cub,

Salim winds a long piece of cloth around his right hand, then removes the iron rod from the fire. He holds it for a while, one end of it glowing red, briefly, before it turns an ashy black, . . . he drives the hot end of the

rod through the area just above the dark grey tip of the cub's nose, pierces it in one go, brings it out, then drives it in again a few centimetres above that point punching a hole through the bone. The wail of a child punctures the hush with unexpected force. The cub cannot writhe or move - it is pinned into place at every point where movement can occur. (98)

The cub out of fear and because of the unbearable pain, shits and pisses. The thread with mustard oil is then inserted into the cub's nose. The fire burns the flesh inside the cub's nose. The cub runs out of energy, it squints and continuously opens its eyes and shuts them. Lakshman himself is moved by the pain of the bear but Salim says, "They are animals, their pain doesn't last . . . They heal quickly, they're strong. It's we humans, who are weak" (99). The horror behind this cruel act is unexplainable in words. Raju grows up but Lakshman could not make a hygienic stable for him. Poor Raju cries out of hunger every time but painful whips alone become his food every time he cried. The animal too starves with Lakshman's family; Raju has lost all his freedom of leisure in the woods. Lakshman beats the animal every time during the training session. One day accidentally he pulls the thread which was inserted inside the cub's nose and the animal squeals and shouts in pain. From then onwards Lakshman pulls the thread every time to make the cub obey his words, he enjoys watching the animal jump in pain as a sport. That painful jump is the Bear dance.

The Bear jumps up and hops and prances on his two hind legs. From then, Raju starts to be afraid of Lakshman. As days passed Lakshman has started to hate his brother Ramlal for having put an extra burden of his family on him. For a long time, there is no hearing from Ramlal and Lakshman's wife is unable to pay someone to clean the bear's shit. Finally one day, Lakshman left the house with Raju to be a nomad.

The suffering of the cub Raju, can be compared to the suffering of the working class people. As the cub is beaten and tortured, so are the servants and labourers tortured; as the cub is not fed properly so are the proletariats not given their wages; as the cub has no proper shelter so do the proletariats take refuge in streets. Raju and Lakshman walk miles in the hot season of the day expecting audience and money; they sleep under the trees and perform in places like temples and crossroads where the public gather. This incident brings out how the proletariats hunt for livelihood even during the odd hours of nature, no matter summer or rain. They do not want to beg but work and eat but the class system never gives them the right to scale high standards but entertains exploitation and laughs at the poor people suffering out of pain.

In few places Lakshman is humiliated, he is called a beggar, few stone him and rarely few give Raju some eatables like biscuits, laddoos, oranges, bananas, roti and other sweets. Lakshman takes his share from Raju's and whenever he has to quench his thirst of anger, he brings down the stick upon Raju. Thus Lakshman is at the peak of poverty and so is psychologically depressed and vexed. At times shopkeepers would be afraid of Raju when Lakshman takes him there. When they hide themselves, Lakshman would steal something to eat.

On the other side of the novel, Ramlal, Lakshman's brother who has left his house to be a labourer in a construction site. His cleaning of yards in the construction site has affected his lungs with white smoky dust. Ramlal has been promised hundred and fifty rupees a day but gets only seventy- five and when he timidly asks the masters, he is asked to leave if does not like what he gets. His childhood dream is to be a pampered as the son of a rich but the world filled with the domination of the bourgeoisie never gives him a chance at least to give it a try.

One day he has to go the highest point of the building to work and he is promised two hundred rupees that day. The height makes him feel like a bird on its flight. As he is working, he feels like coughing: “the inside of his chest which has become like keema he can feel it one cough he has to there’s no choice he lets out one cough and his chest explodes” (275), and that is the end of his story, he becomes husk at last. It is visible that the bourgeoisie do not bother to look into the struggle of the working class but keep disgusting them for their menial jobs. Even in the narrator’s house there is a discussion for the type of cuisine, the proletariats fill them with animals’ food. The bourgeoisie have money to pay different types of household servants while the proletariats beg for alms. They fail to realise that those bourgeoisie are the ones who push them to do odd jobs.

Suppressed for ages, the proletariats become tired even to make a try to stand up, even if they stood up the bourgeoisie will push them down and vigilantly take care that their wound is not healed. The suffering story of Raju stands as a shadow for the proletariats. The bourgeoisie harm and torture the proletariats for their welfare. To the bourgeoisie, the proletariats are not living beings who can feel the pain just like they do as Salim said Raju cannot feel the pain as he was an animal. The Bourgeoisie too give lame excuses and illogical justifications for their treatment of the proletariats but their way of exploiting the downtrodden people does not stop with the harms discussed till this point.

Sexual abuse is one of the major features under the concept of exploitation. The women who go to the forests to gather dry leaves are harassed by the forest officers who take a chance of them in the name of enquiring about the license to gather leaves. One such victim is Soni’s sister. Soni’s father is so poor that he could not take up the expense of his wife’s treatment as a result of which she passes away and Sonu who

witnesses all these injustice actions joins the liberated terrorists of the Communist Party of India.

In his *The Lives of Others*, Neel Mukherjee boldly talks about the consequences of bourgeoisie pride and their violence towards the proletariats. Priyo a son of the bourgeoisie Ghosh family goes to have an illegal physical relationship with a whore named Nandita. Priyo is a frequent visitor of those kind of places and Nandita is described as a sixteen- year old girl whose appearance seem to be older because of the deprivation she goes through. The author describes Nandita as,

She looked a lot older, not because of her trade, or the company she kept, or the fact that she had tried to cake her face with cheap snow and powder and colour her dry lips in an attempt to look alluring, but because her eyes had not been those of a sixteen year old. The flash and spark, the quickness in an adolescent's eyes, had settled into calculating lethargy, a caution that was also a hopeless inertia; they were not out of place in their turbid surroundings (89).

Priyo forces the girl for a certain abominable act of sexual movement and verbally abuses her when she is not prepared for that. Nandita starts to weep and when her friends come to resist him, Priyo does not apologise first but thinkst of seeking the help of police in his favour. This clearly shows that the judiciary is under the control of the bourgeoisie. Nandita is not seen as a girl who takes up whoredom willingly but her state of poverty has forced her to take up that profession for her basic means of living. There is no details given about her parents or relatives, even when she cries only her neighbours who are into prostitution come to help her.

A man enters Nandita's place during commotion who is "a short, lean young man, with dark face, his face pitted from a bad case of childhood pox, and oil- slicked

hair combed flat over his head and ears and curling to a well- maintained wave right at the nape of his neck, . . .” (95). He is in charge of the girls who are into prostitution. He must have made an earning out of their abuse. In another occasion he goes to the habitat of tribal women, tries to physically assault a tribal woman but the tribal people gather against him beating him to death. This is how people into prostitution are exploited physically and they lose their dignity and self - respect and go through mental trauma.

Though discrimination and untouchability have been prohibited under the constitution of India, prejudice and suppression of the working- class people still exist in rural, urban and all the working places. The wealthy bourgeoisie are the owners of mills, factories and land properties whereas the proletariats for generations are cursed to be under the bondage of working class. This scenario has made the living of the proletariats very terrible and abusive. Women are bullied and harassed by their masters but are unable to raise their voices against it as the society will never fail to stand by the bourgeoisie. This evidently shows how class system pollutes the Indian democracy.

To bring about betterment in the society, Karl Marx in *Wages and the Capital* suggests that “the cost of production of . . . [labour-power] must include the cost of propagation, by means of which the race of workers is enabled to multiply itself, and to replace worn-out workers with new ones” (np). But contrarily the bourgeoisie expropriate the vulnerability of the proletariats to attain their own profit. They determine the price of labour-power only by the cost of food, clothing and housing at a particular standard of living; some of the bourgeoisie fail to do even that.

## Chapter IV

### Marxian Phases of Alienation

What, then, constitutes the alienation of labour? First, in the fact that labour is external to the worker, that is, that it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel well but unhappy, does not freely develop his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker, therefore, feels himself only outside his work, and feels beside himself in his work. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home. His work therefore is not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labour. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need, but only a means for satisfying needs external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that labour is shunned like the plague as soon as there is no physical or other compulsion.

- Karl Marx

Going back to the historical perspectives of alienation, it was first used in the theology, talking about how man's dark natures alienate him from the divine light. Later in the German trend it meant to 'make another's'. It also referred to a human state of being alienated or estranged from something or somebody.

The Latin origin of “alienation” is *alienation* and this noun derives its meaning from ‘alienare’ which means to make something’s another, to take away or remove. The principal Latin ‘alienare’ or alienation is in connection with property; here ‘alienare’ acquires its bond with Marxism referring to the transfer of ownership of something to another person.

Alienation in general is the state in which man realizes his impossibility of control over nature. Even today alienation prevails in the society in all walks of life. According to Hegel, alienation is the state which is related to the spirit of man and the absolute truth of nature, Feuerbach saw alienation connected with materialistic spirit but according to Karl Marx alienation is all about the transfer of individualism to the power of capitalism. Marxist alienation refers to disenfranchisement of the proletariat from all benefits and goodness of life.

Karl Marx, one of the most influential thinkers of the nineteenth century, in his theory stresses on equality and classless society. It is proven that Marx was against the firms of capitalist power as he said that the labourers were treated as commodities and exploited under the capitalists’ rule. In his theory of alienation, Marx puts forward his argument that the ruling class managers and supervisors make the workers detached from all forms of humanity.

According to Karl Marx, alienation can be divided into four types, Capitalism being the foundation for all of them. Firstly, Capitalism manipulates workers with specific goals and objectives to increase productivity and output as a result of which the workers lose hope and determination. The worker is considered as an instrument to attain the fixed profit of production by the ruling class and thus it curbs the individual creativity, freedom and above all his own identity from every proletariat. Discussing the types of Marxist alienation, a worker from the proletariat class is first separated or

alienated from the product of his own labour, then from the process of production, from the society and then from himself. By the nature of patriarchy, the bourgeoisie make the proletariats believe that they are destined by birth to be slave workers. There is a permanent margin between the ruling class and the working class. That margin brings in untouchability and the scenario appears as though the masters and the workers belong to different species and the workers are alienated from the posh bourgeoisie and from themselves.

The only aim of bourgeoisie capitalists is to achieve their profit and they use the workers to toil worse than animals. The capitalists make an eyewash and create a sequel as if they compensate the labour with due payment but that remains only as an illusion. Next, it can be said that the repeated patterns of factory work or farm work make the worker loose his artistic skills and he knowingly becomes a machine. As Karl Marx in his 1<sup>st</sup> volume of *A critical Analysis of Capitalist Pro* says, “Money is the alienated essence of man's labour and life; and this alien essence dominates him as he worships it” (np). Man accepts to be a slave for the sake of money as he knows that he cannot survive protesting against his masters. A worker is thus alienated from productivity itself. The intrinsic value of the labourer’s hard work is lost.

Alienation is a great part of social evil and terror created by the bourgeoisie society. Neel Mukherjee, in his novels has brought out the aspects of the four types of alienation and portrays the trials and tribulations, joys and jealousies faced due to them. He says how an individual is forced to be alienated from his labour, family, his society and from his own inner self because of patriarchy, hierarchy and other societal plagues. From the author’s narration it is well understood how alienation submerges a person’s act towards his own freedom. In *A State of Freedom*, Neel Mukherjee delineates the plight of domestic workers and how they are alienated from the production of their

labour while in *The Lives of Others* he talks about how Capitalism and its fatal violence alienates an individual from the products, from the familial bonds and from himself.

On a deep analysis of *The Lives of Others*, it is seen that patriarchy and hierarchy transform every bourgeoisie into a hypocrite. It includes all types of alienation but mainly concentrates class discrimination. The Ghoshes have an old family retainer Madan. He is considered to be one among the family but the fact that he is an outcaste servant and it is not forgotten by anyone. He is alienated due to his caste difference which is evident in many circumstances. Though Madan da has been living with them for a long time, he is not given any special benefit of education or anything out of humanness, he remains there only as a person of service in domestic household. The only benefit he receives is his son is accepted to be a worker in the Ghoshes' factory but when he protests for high wages, it is considered as Madan da's unfaithfulness towards the Ghoshes.

Madan says, "Well, we are poor, illiterate people, what do we know," . . . (22). This shows that the proletariats are under the alienation due to class or the subjugation of the bourgeoisie. After a wedding in the Ghosh's house the jewellery of Purnima, a daughter in law of the Ghosh is missing. Everyone suspects the servants in the house. Even before proper investigation the servants are verbally abused and tortured, violent and ill-mannered language is used against them. Soon after the theft, "the police are called. Three servant boys are questioned, threatened, slapped around a bit. They are in tears, they deny everything. Their bodies are clothed are searched, then the room in the servants' quarters where they sleep". Chhaya says of Madan that, "Just because someone has been in the family for ten years doesn't mean that they are honest or above temptation. Maybe it was part of the plan to stay long, to lull us into a false sense of security and trust" (435).

Unfortunately the lost ring is found in Madan's room but it is unknown how it has been there. Madan da is blamed even before it is proven that he is the thief. Charubala, the mistress of the Ghosh family says, "Madan is one of our's. He has been at my children's births, he has been with us longer than some of my children" (438). In spite of all these sayings, Madan is hit and slapped by the police and they drag him out of the house. Madan cries that he is innocent falling at the feet of the Ghoshes; He falls prostrate at the feet of Charubala and says, "Ma, I've eaten your salt, I would never do something like this, I'd much rather take poison than steal from you. Ma, Ma, please . . . I'm telling the truth, please save me, save me!" (441). Prafullnath Ghosh says that Madan is distrustful and it is he who has moved his son Dulal to protest against the masters in the factory.

No matter how much Madan has sacrificed, how much he has laboured hard for the masters, Madan is treated an alien by the Ghoshes by means of his caste, manner of work, appearance etc. Madan could not tolerate that he is not one among the Ghoshes and this truth becomes unbearable for him. Madan says in the end, "This is how it ends, I should have known. The milk and the mango-flesh mell, the mango stone is always rejected"(441).

True to his words, Madan is extracted of his loyalty, hard work, health etc., by the Ghosh family and when they realize that he will not be of so much importance anymore, Madan is thrown. As Charu says, "Madan is one of ours" (438), if Madan has been truly considered as one in the family, he would have been saved the Ghoshes taken initiatives to save him? Thus Madan remains alien and a stranger to the bourgeoisie Ghoshes. He is not even an object of dignity for the Ghoshes in- spite of all his services rendered to them.

To stress on the alienation based on class and caste, Neel Mukherjee paints another character Purba, daughter-in-law of the Ghoshes who is an outcaste. She is the cousin of Prasanta, a servant of the Ghoshes. Through Prasanta it is known that when Purba was sixteen, she was into difficult times and that her parents found it difficult even to pay her school fees. The cunning Ghoshes used this opportunity to make Purba the wife of their ill-natured, cruel young son Somnath. Charubala, Somnath's mother, seeing Purba's picture for the first time, remarked her as Goddess Lakshmi and that she would reform her husband. "The disparity in class (and caste) was so huge as to be unbridgeable, but bridged it was" (353) because of the Ghoshes' narcissism. Purba is married to Somnath and thereafter Purba like a goat becomes a prey for beastly Somnath. She undergoes marital rape:

The nightmare was of hot, heavy, unidentifiable weight, which seemed to surround her, at once over and around her, something bearing down to crush her ribs and all the breath out of her tiny, squeezed lungs ... and she could not breathe ... breathe in ... brea- She woke up to find a huge animal on her. She screamed or tried to. She tried again, but terror seemed to have removed her vocal cords. It was a man wrestling her down, kneading her breasts, tearing at her red- and- gold banarasi... a man trying to climb her as he would a ladder. She could not even begin to fight back, she was too small. (354)

Purba accepts to be in the slaughter for the sake of Prasanta for she knows that her in laws are his masters and bread givers. Purba remains silent to all the injustices toward her knowing that she is the daughter of a servant. Purba lives as an alien though she has become one among the family. It is clearly seen that she receives no equal treatment as other daughters-in-law and she is cornered from the family in all aspects.

Purnima the eldest daughter in law is respected by all but Purba is considered a slave. Her class consciousness makes her receive scolding quietly. Her children are treated as the children of an outcast person. They do not even receive the blessings which other grandchildren of the Ghosh family receive. Madhumita Chakrobarty in her article “In Shades of Grey”, comments on the discrimination:

In a telling example, Mukherjee describes the discrimination within the family, when he compares the many new clothes that the other daughters in law and their children receive for Durga Puja with the one new set that is quietly kept into the room. It is also deliberately ironical that of all the grandchildren, it is Son, the most neglected, the most marginalized, who is ultimately the most successful.... (35)

They are not even showered love or affection by the grandparents or uncle and aunt and their cousins stay far from them. Somnath is not seen as a faithful husband to Purba. In the progress of the novel, Somnath is found to be punished by the tribal men and women for having misbehaved with a tribal woman. They beat him to death but Charubala blames Purba for her son’s death saying, “You have brought this great misery upon our heads. You are ill- starred, evil” (417).

A proletariat girl who has sacrificed her life to be the wife of a rogue, appeared as Lakshmi in the beginning but now is blamed for the fateful death of a haughty immoral man. Purba becomes a hapless widow. Charubala once accuses Purba that she has an illegal affair with Shobhan Datta, their neighbour. Even the residue of Purba’s dignity goes unleft. Sadly, Purba does not argue much to prove her innocence as even that act of self- protection would bring her the names like disrespectful and intransigent. Purba along with her two children lives in a mess after her husband’s demise. A sitting room which is never used becomes her living room, the room is

attached with an enclosure for washing up and cutting fishes, an old store room is her bed room, the garages are near this space of accommodation. She who lives in psychological exile is now thrown into physical exile too. “Her exile will begin to take on its physical lineaments”(418).

Caste alienates Purba from her husband’s family, even in the manner of tasks given to her. Maid servants do the washing for the entire Ghosh family but Purba has to do it for herself and her children. Purba is given only ashes for washing while Vim is used by others. Her children Sona and Kalyani are not properly fed, they are not educated but are humiliated as beggars and the children of an outcast. In her “ In Shades of Grey”, Madhumita Chakrobarty says, “The three of them, ‘punished’ due to the untimely death of Purba’s husband, are consecrated to the margins of the house, reduced to eating leftovers, wearing hand- me- down clothes and suffering the caustic tongue tongue of the mother- in- law...” (35). Thus Purba remained alienated from the Ghoshes and “Purba found herself to be the weak animal that the rest of its own kind attacked and drove outside the fold”(418).

In *A State of Freedom*, Neel Mukherjee introduces Lakshman who is a person earning by making his Bear dance. He is an example for alienation from the society based on caste. He carries double burden of sustaining his family and his brother’s family who left to the city hunting for a job. Lakshman along with his bear Raj travels hundreds of miles but does not receive the expected gain. He becomes a nomad. They perform at the crossroads, in public gatherings etc., Lakshman’s life itself becomes beastly. Introspecting his living, Lakshman is alienated from the life of a human being; travelling with a bear he too roams, wanders and performs with Raju. They roam and live along with pigs, dogs, snotty children with matted hair in dense slums. Lakshman regrets his life on the streets and feels, “when he had a home, more to eat than he has

now, his wife to look after him, children to carry on his line and take care of him in his old age?" (139).

Once Lakshman goes out with Raju and finds a temple in which a blue faced Shiva is seated on a Cow with a subtle smile. He thinks that the reason for the smile is looking at the hilarious acts of human beings. Lakshman offers a garland and a watermelon to the priest in the temple but the priest on seeing Raju with Lakshman understands his class and says, "Stay away, stay away, this is a temple, can't you see? It's not for people of your kind" (151). The class system alienates humans creating divisions among them. Class distinction is followed in India, but it is an irony that Lakshman from a tribe is alienated from the tribal God Shiva himself. The upper-class people who worship Shiva, illogically stands apart from other tribes. Lakshman is alienated from his house, alienated from his house; from his family, from the society and finally is alienated from himself and feels that "he will be blown away, out of the barred window, like a mote of dust or feather" (162).

Alienation based on caste system, has made the lives of Indians worse. Milly and Renu are two maids who work in the house of the narrator of *A State of Freedom*. Both of them have lots of restrictions in the house. They are accessible only to the kitchen of the house. Milly has worked as a domestic maid in several houses where she has been given plate and glass for eating and drinking. The servants are alienated from the life style of the upper class.

Neel Mukherjee deeply explains an individual's alienation from the product of his labour in the novel *The Lives of others*. This novel begins with the depiction of a Nitai Das a farmer dying for food and water with his family. Nitai Das is a farmer who owns no land but works as a sharecropper and a wage labourer. His work is only for three or five months of a year so he runs short of money even for his basic living.

Farmers like Nitai have no money even to buy seeds so they get into debts. He owns a tiny vegetable patch next to his hut but he has to pawn that area to a moneylender. Nitai could not leave his village to work in a construction sight as he has to look after his family. The moneylender gives Nitai two kilos of rice making a covenant for three kilos in a month's return. But Nitai's inner voice said, ". . .give me the rice now, my family is starving now, I'll think of what comes later later" (125).

Nitai is not able to pay back the loan so he decides to work for the moneylenders for no wages. Nitai receives not even a single meal of the day from his masters. He is the one who cultivates the land of his landlord, but during the long drought of three years he has become hopelessly helpless. The money lenders tell the peasants like Nitai that they are not able to pay them or feed them due to drought. But actually all the food grains are stored in the bourgeoisie's barns and warehouses, and are exported in lorries and trucks for large profits during the nights.

The fruits of his sweat become alienated to Nitai. He begs his landlord for some stuff to fill his stomach but even animals' hay was refused to him. He is unable to feed his family so he kills them and he kills himself too.

He lifts the jerrycan of Folidol left over from three seasons ago and drinks, his mouth to the lip of the plastic canister, until he can drink no more. His insides burn numb and he thrashes and writhes like a speared earthworm, thrashes and writhes, a pink foam emerging from his mouth, until he too is returned from the nothing in his life to nothing. (3)

Similarly in *A State of Freedom*, Lakshman's brother who has gone to the city, seeking for a job is not paid the promised wages. He is promised hundred and twenty five rupees per day but is paid only seventy five rupees. He is asked to quit the job when he demands the sum which was promised to him. He accepts to work harder on the top

of buildings with great heights because he wants money at least to fill half of his stomach. He is affected by cloudy wool like stuff which comes out of the corrugated grey roof. This is the plight of the workers. They are alienated from their family and from their own self-respect for the sake of money and food. At the end of the day, the workers are alienated even from their wages and some are alienated even from their psyche and some are alienated from the literal life on earth.

Another farm worker Kanu in *The Lives of Others*, reports that their masters have reduced their wages due to low yield. He says,

We should have ended up with a hundred rupees each, but the manager of the bigger piece of land decreed that because of an unusually low yield this year, ... the labourers would get only three rupees each day. Thirty rupees for working a ten- hour day for ten days in which even breathing seems a luxury. (150)

He also adds that the meal of the farmers is reduced to halves and if they ask for food, their masters call them stonehearted people who expect food during depletion and that they are ungrateful for what they receive.

At the same time, there is labour unrest in the factories. Labourers demand increment in their wages and for reduction of working hours. But they do not even have direct contact to their masters but managers on their behalf address the workers. The wants, needs and cries of the workers do not reach the ears of the factory owners. If reached they do not seek to sort out the issue but brought the police to stop the workers' strike. Everything is getting mechanized in the factories and the manpower is affected.

The labourers in the Ghoshes' paper factory work so hard to clean the impurities. Workers in a paper factory stand in the brown waste wave pool pushing the water into the ditch. This affects them with skin allergies. They strain themselves too

much cleaning the cylinders, churners and huge drums which contain the brown water. They churn and beat and sieve the innumerable vats of dirty greyish white chime that float up to the top as the raw material (171). They will also work long hours without rest, subjecting the water into dozens of chemical processes. The rubbish wet mound which they clean include plastic, buttons, bits of metal, straw, clips, particles of rags and other unidentifiable coloured solids which hurt the cleaners body.

The workers work amidst tall, narrow, cylindrical cages of iron rods sticking out of the water at regular intervals, like the carpals of a futuristic skeleton. They have to climb heart pumping heights on the ladders to reach enormously huge drums in which white foam is circulated with two machinery arms the mechanism of which frighten the workers. Sometimes the workers lose the parts of their bodies such as limbs and eyes while working with such giant electronics. Bijan, one of the factory workers says to his master Ghosh, “My elder brother lost his hand. You threw him out because he was no longer useful to you” (380).

Moreover mental stability of the workers is also disturbed by the sound and squeals of the machinery. Boredom strikes them as they repeat the same work every hour and this made them loose their memory: “. . . making one stone skim the surface of the water one, two, three, four times before it sank; the challenge here was to make it work in the severely confined space of the tank. . . . Surrounded by the building blocks and tricky manoeuvres for making money . . .” (171).

The workers in the factory are made to toil very hard not minding their lives and they are not paid for their hard labour also. They are alienated to their wages due to the physical labour and mental stress, some have lost their own memory and many fall sick psychologically and physically. Thus in workplaces, farm or factory the proletariats are

alienated to their profit; not even to profit but are alienated to the due wages. But the bourgeoisie live luxuriously eating the fruit of the labourers.

The domestic servants in the bourgeoisie's houses are not out of this domination. The Ghosh children dislike being scolded in front of the servants. Neel Mukherjee brings out the dislike of the bourgeoisie for the proletariat through Somnath, the youngest son of the Ghosh family who sees servants as his musers. He is violent by nature, His favourite creatures are the shiny, rust- brown centipedes, which were quite common, especially on the ground floor, during the monsoon. They are his favourite beings of dissection:

He spent hours trying to stretch them out to their natural length, once they had rolled into themselves, by impaling them with safety pins or needles to isolate their two ends and then pulling on both simultaneously....the inert coil of the centipede first doused in a few drops of kerosene flitted from the kitchen, then lit a match held to it, causing instant ignition, the flames hardly visible in the strong sunlight....(222)

Somnath steals a couple of his father's Valium pills, crushes them to powder to give it to the cats. "Somnath was faced with a dilemma; he did not know which would give him more pleasure- the drug- induced death of the cat or beating it to a pulp with the lathi, once the tranquillisers had kicked in and it was incapable of escaping" (225). Somnath alienates the animals from their own freedom living. This is how Somnath treats his servants too. The poor servants are in a state of alienation from themselves; alienated from their dignity, self- respect, dreams and aspirations just to fill their stomachs.

It is a practice of the servants of the Ghosh house to save starch water from the cooked rice for the skin and bones beggars. The beggars come daily for this and Somnath is fascinated looking at this sight. He will not go inside when his mother calls him inside. He does not like the servants being fed even with that starch water. Once Somnath

“kicked the half empty aluminium bowl, which one of the little girls had set down for a minute to watch the struggle, and sent the gruel spilling in first a swift then a slow, broad lick across the top of the stairs...The older-looking of the two girls went down on all fours, prostrated herself on the floor and started to lick up the spill” (223).

This shows how people from their birth inherit the practice of class distinction.

In *A State of Freedom*, alienation of an individual from his production and social circles is majorly brought to light. It also discusses alienation inside the group of working class themselves. Milly a domestic servant talks about a lohar who used to visit her village when she was a child. The lohar sharpened all the farming and cooking equipment such as the knives, sickles etc. He did his job sitting in the courtyard around which the houses were built as “he was not allowed to enter any of them” (166).

Neel Mukherjee adds to the horror of alienation by talking about sexual abuse with regard to class distinction. In *A State of Freedom*, Milly’s childhood friend Sona lives the life of a naxal just like Supratik in *The Lives of Others*. Supratik who is born in a well-to-do family is unhappy with the treatment of servants at his home. He was a part of the student mobs for liberation but at one point of time, as stated in Anita Desai’s “The Real India”, Supratik “has come to think of all such student activities as a sideshow, a diversion, that the strikes-student strike, bus strike, tram strike-changed nothing” (66). So he goes ahead and joins the Naxal movement. Soni with her elder

sister goes into the forest to collect kendu leaves. They are paid twenty paise if they collect 100 leaves. Soni's sister grabs the attention of the forest officers, they like maniacs laugh roaring and threaten the young girl asking her for license, meanwhile they grab her wrist and the girl wriggles to escape but she is beaten. Her knees and elbows are scabbed and her legs are cut in places. The villagers who depend on ecosystem for livelihood are also alienated from their peaceful and eco- friendly life. Their right to movement becomes a prey to the wolf like bourgeoisie. The torment, which the poor tribal undergo alienate them to the illumination of their lives.

Neel Mukherjee says that, Soni's eyes "were distant and out of focus all the time, as if they had become strangers to the head to which they felt they didn't belong any longer" (180). She is psychologically alienated from herself. Alienation is a cyclic process and one type of alienation follows the other continuously. An individual is discriminated based on class and is cornered from the society because of which most of the working- class people become oppressed without money so they get into odd jobs for which they receive no wages, when some labour is done for survival, they are abused in many ways leading to self- alienation and mental sickness.

The trauma after the abuse, makes Soni's sister sick and she is in an isolated world. The young girl is alienated from her society and all the pleasures of youth life. Men in her village would not be ready to marry her as her abuse would have spread across the village. She is also alienated from her own familial bond, whenever her relatives talk on the issue and on seeing her mother crying the girl continues to be in alienation and she becomes even more depressed due to shame. Soni's mother is seriously sick and both her parents together go to a hospital in a town. The bus fare of rupees seventy- five seems out of their reach, her father borrows money from all sides for the ticket and the medicines but he could not think of a way to repay the amount. In

the hospital, Sony's father lacks guidance; he does not know where to go and is unable to negotiate any sign. One among the crowd in the hospital says,

Go to the table there, they can help you. When he went to the table, he was told he had to go somewhere else. At a counter, the press of the people clamouring to be heard reaching forward pieces of paper, elbowing and jostling, defeated him. How was he ever going to get to the front? When he did get there, after an hour, he was told he had come to the wrong place. He had to go upstairs. They couldn't help him here, this was the... then some unintelligible words. He went up two flights of stairs to the next floor. People rushing about, waiting, sitting, standing. Who was he going to ask for help? He fixed on a woman he thought looked like a doctor; she had that; listening rope around her neck. She told him he had to come to the wrong place. He had to go downstairs and ask at the main counter. He went downstairs again. He was a tiny piece of straw in the wind. When he jostled his way to the counter downstairs, he was told to go upstairs again. This time he said that he had already been, but had been sent back down . . . his will, his mouth twisted, like a child's; he couldn't; he couldn't make it hold its shape; he failed to make his crying resemble a dignified adult's. (181)

Soni's father a rural man is being alienated to the pride of city dwelling. He is an uneducated person, his poverty, a gift of his forefathers prohibits him from the legacy of education, so in the hospital he feels alienated. He does not know whom to ask, rather than taking care of his sick wife he is grief stricken because of the alienation he faces. Alienation makes him lonely and he is in the hospital like a poor wayfaring stranger. His inferiority troubles him and utterly defeats him.

Days later, Soni and her sister who witness all the wickedness of the upper-class people, join the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army. The party people are like naxals who sacrifice their lives of unchanging poverty and misery. Theirs is "Life on the move, in the open air, was tough. Sometimes it felt that they were little more than wild pack- animals carrying loads on their backs and heads, sacks of rice and grain, heavy kitbags, moving from one village to another through the jungle" (197). This is how Soni and her team are alienated from their well-being. Theirs is a triple alienation. They are alienated from the basic necessities of life so they get into a strike by means of which they are alienated from their family and holding on to the motives of the strike and party they are alienated from their desires.

Apart from industrial workers and servants, Neel Mukherjee also talks about farmers who are the lungs of humanity and are alienated from food in the novel *The Lives of Others*. Through this piece of fiction, it is understood that the farmers become poor and proliferate themselves into begging in order to escape the famine in the country side. This shows how cultivators of the soil, sowers of grains are alienated from the reward of their hard work. The landlords cheat them, alienate them from their own land taking it for low price during their tough times and give them no food but export it. The city dwellers, who receive the exported food also alienate the grains from the farmers who are in the state of begging.

Proletariats are not benefitted in any way but the bourgeoisie enjoy good living by all means while meekness and subordination differences of class and wealth are consolidated by hunger and debility. The rich entice the proletariats by showing the drug of money to them for which they toil hard, but only at the end the workers realize that they have not received their wages but have been over induced with the drug called slavery and hard work and. Even if they wake up, they are so much into the drug of

slavery that they tremble to stand up for rights. The bourgeoisie induce them for years together and generation together, alienating them to their own skills and healthy life.

Supratik, a grandson of the upper middle class Ghoshes, is educated in good school, and also has the benefit of college education. He has enough to eat and enough to wear, He lives in a comfortable atmosphere not having a day's want. All of a sudden, his mother finds a letter by him which says,

Ma, I feel exhausted with consuming, with taking and grabbing and using, I am so bloated that I feel I cannot breathe any more. I am leaving to find some air, some place where I shall be able to purge myself, push back against the life given me and make my own. I feel I live in a borrowed house. It's time to find my own. Trying to discover my whereabouts won't get you anywhere, to save that energy; you might you need it for something else. I'll write periodically to let you know I'm alive. Forgive me. (60)

Supratik thinks that to die for the people is weightier than Mount Taj, but to work for the fascists and to die for the exploiters and the oppressors would be lighter than a feather. Being a bourgeoisie, he chooses bravely and generously to die for the proletariats. This alienates himself from his family and all the benefits of upper class living.

Years later after he leaves his house, he comes to his house as a refugee to escape the police. Then he notices his brother getting addicted to harmful drugs. So Supratik is worried and he advises his brother not to get into drugs; once he slaps him during an argument. His brother does not pay attention to him but treated Supratik as an outcast of the family. He does not recognize Supratik as his brother but abuses him as one who left his parents and family. The good cause behind Supratik's intention goes

unnoticed till the end. Later, the police catch hold of Supratik at his very house but no one from his family tries to save him because they do not see him as their son but looked down upon him as a criminal who went alienated to their patriarchal custom of his family by fighting for the working class.

Supratik, a person born of upper class family separates himself from that bourgeoisie lifestyle but the reward he receives is that he becomes a clairvoyant and an open receptacle to the police for beating. His mouth, throat and intestine are all completely dry. The police insert a hypodermic needle into his thighs, it hurts him more.

The scar of sickle created on Supratik's body is like a warning by the police to those supporting the farmers stating, that it will be the end of anyone daring to stand against the bourgeoisie to help the working class. Supratik begs the police to believe his words but they would not accept. He cries and mewls and curls in pain like a worm but his voice is an alien's noise to the bourgeoisie. He is totally alienated from happy and peaceful living. His sacrifice is not recognized but is killed for having stood up against the masters for the sake of the proletariats. Supratik suffers double alienation. One is, those from the upper class, who support the farmers become strangers and are alienated from his community. The second one is the death of alienation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariats that the police use farmers' sickle as a mark of punishment. His beatings deprive him of all freedom of movement. He loses energy and he is not even able to shout out of pain. Though he is physically sick, his motive of sacrifice rages inside him. Supratik chants the chorus from Manimela, "Lift up this body of mine/ Make me a burning lamp in Your temple.../Touch my soul with the touchstone of fire/ sanctify my life with this burnt offering" ( 489).

One dead night, the police bundle him into a black van, stop in a forest and ask Supratik to go home. The victim could not even realize what is happening around him. He hobbles and leaps with much trouble as it is difficult for him to move. They command him to run; suddenly a shot is heard. “The first bullet gets him in the back of his skull, the second in his back, under his left shoulder blade. He falls to the ground face down” (490). This is what patriarchy destined even for Supratik, born in an upper middle class family. If a bourgeoisie is with the bourgeoisie he can live his life to the fullest in the blood of the proletariats, if he tries to alienate himself from torturing the poor, the other bourgeoisie will alienate him from all the wealth of a peaceful life. Supratik dies as an alien, no one in his family bothers his absence. Atleast the first time when he disappeared his mother mourned , but the second time nothing adds to Supratik’s favour. Even when he returns he is treated like an un welcomed son and his return is not celebrated because his family hated him for being a naxal. He lived and died as an alienated man in the family and the society.

The consequence of alienation is the detachment of a proletariat from his people and from himself. Due to the burden of labour, a worker finds it difficult to engage with his world of relationships. For the purpose of domestic labour, a person is alienated from his family and from his nativity. On another perspective, the working pattern creates jealousy between the workers themselves as a sign of competition in producing the large amount of targeted profit. Thus, one’s life as a worker pushes him into a new world of slavery where an individual is frustrated as he is forced to lose his own aspirations, dreams and desires. He faces challenges which are out of his own interest and as he continues to work harder and harder, he forgets himself and it becomes harder for him to trace back his identity.

**Chapter V**

**Conclusion**

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

- Martin Luther King

Indian English literature with its agglomeration on society and civilisation has emerged as a light to the people who were in the darkness and has shone itself as a hope of reformation. The waves of Indian writing soared high during the British reign causing revolutions in the society. It was the time when India was bound not only by colonisation but by patriarchy too. Indian writing in English has become an entity of life's implications, discussing human intricacies and relationships. It is one fortress under which all the subdued and the oppressed of the country take refuge. Indian writers boldly write on caste, class and their filthy stain on the Indian democracy. Indian writing in English has established an aesthetic attachment with the souls of the country's population, as it revealed to the world their sufferings and also fought for their serenity and harmony.

Marxist writing in India has made a demonstrable impact on the Indian lives. Writers like Rabindranath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, V.S Naipaul, Kailash Dutt, Amitav Ghosh and Aravind Adiga have emphasized on the central value of fraternity and equality. Marxist writings have resonated and reverberated the voice of suppressed around the world and has shaken the bourgeoisie law of enslaving the poor and the down trodden. As a result of all the demands and protests, laws have been enforced in the favour of the proletariats. The system of reserved constituencies is a dawn for the lower class people of the society but the shadow of their troubles and pain continue to chase them till date in India.

India is an institution of class system where inequality is so elaborately constructed. It is severely criticised in the modern century by both Indian and foreign

observers. The statement class is not considered anymore itself has become a weapon of the class politics. As the article “Gender Religion and Caste in politics” says, today it is shocking to see that authorities of the governing body themselves take up class and religion as a token for wooing people of their group (np).

Miriam Sharma in her article “India Varna, Caste and Other Divisions” says that “Large landholders who employ hired labour are overwhelmingly from the upper castes, while the agricultural workers themselves come from the ranks of the lowest--predominantly Untouchable-castes” (np). It is shocking to see that inspite of reserved constituencies, distribution of resources and access to political control follow the pattern of class distinctions.

The rich groups include prosperous industrialists and entrepreneurs, bureaucrats, civil servants and political office holders. They enjoy good salaries and perquisites in all possible ways while members of various service class perform tasks for their masters. Households of service class are the gifts of hereditary bonds to a household of patrons. Thus, client families of launderers, barbers, shoemakers, carpenters, potters, tailors, and priests provide customary services to the bourgeoisie according to the traditional custom of service specialisation in return for seasonal payments of grain and clothing. The economic system of the country continues to be down because of this inequality.

Today there are two stories being told in India; one is about how education has transformed the lives of the marginalized and the other is about the fundamental economic growth due to the disposition of social hierarchies. The so called civilized nation is just an illusion as it seems to be uncivilized as never before, because the purpose of freedom has not been fully understood by the citizens. Behind every invention there is the observation and imitation of natural laws but there is no natural

law seen under the introduction and subsequent perception of the class system. So discrimination remains to be a major blot on the Indian democracy. The patrons own the control over the bodies and lives of their workers. Tripti Lahiri discusses the lives of Indian domestic workers and in the article “Overworked, Underpaid, Abused: Inside the world of India’s Domestic Workers” in the *Hindustan Times* it is said that, “In the decade after liberalisation, there was a nearly 120% rise in the number of domestic workers in India from 7.4 lakh in 1991 to 16.2 lakh workers by 2001, says author Tripti Lahiri quoting census data in her recently released book, *Maid In India*” (np) .

The article “Overworked, Underpaid, Abused: Inside the world of India’s Domestic Workers” in the *Hindustan Times* says,

. . . between 1991 and 2001 there was a 120% increase in the numbers of domestic help. It’s true that India has seen a stagnation, even a shrinking, in female labour participation rates long-term. But because of the immense growth of the population, even with that apparent stagnancy, the absolute numbers of women working outside the home have gone up. The Census shows the numbers of female workers aged 15-59 went up 17% between 2001 and 2011. In cities, it went up over 70% from around 14.7 million in 2001 to 25 million in 2011. That trend is driving a demand for help. Again, more people are prosperous, so even when women in affluent households stay home, those homes can still afford - and want to - hire help. (np)

The Labour Ministry has also opined to strike down labour-security laws such as Minimum Wages Act (1948), Payment of Wages Act (1965), Bonus Payment Act (1965) and Equal Wages Act (1976). Indian Government has not agreed to the long pending demand of trade unions for equal wages to the contract workers as per the rules

under Contract Labour Act; on the contrary it has promised that all contract workers will be paid minimum wages. This shows that labours are unidentified. This causes emotional distress and a sense of helplessness.

The article “The Silent Tragedy in our Homes” published in *India Today* says,

In April 2012, a doctor couple based in Delhi locked up their 13-year-old domestic to go on vacation to Thailand. She was eventually rescued by fire fighters who were alerted by neighbours who heard feeble cries coming from the doctors' home. The girl was suffering from trauma that was linked to her having been beaten up and abused over a long period of time. Both the 13-year-old and the 18-year-old maid, mentioned above, came from places far from Delhi- they had been trafficked or 'sent off' by the parents to earn money and contribute to the family income back home. That they represent the poorest sections of the population is no surprise. But the thriving market in children being brought in to work at shops, homes and office establishment bears testimony to how the urban middle class is deeply dependent on their services. (np)

According to the psychologists, the proletariats who are compounded by this feeling of impossibility of making any progressive changes in their lives are traumatised. They feel that they have control only over their physical being and develop that instinct to take power over themselves. It is otherwise called coping mechanism - a means by which to get through the immediate cause of stress and emotional pain by gaining something tangible to focus on, after which body produces certain chemicals which are released as natural pain killer. They harm themselves by cutting, bashing and ingesting toxic substances. It is reported that those who are discriminated on various

basis, feel physically different when they hurt themselves and that by doing so they escape the emotional strain at least for a temporary period of time.

Neel Mukherjee expresses the painful state of the working class people and Naxals in his books *The Lives of Others* and *A State of Freedom*. The central idea or the themes of his works fall under the genre of Marxism. Though Marxism is a topic which most of the critics have dealt with, the tenets of Marxian theory, fit in the exact scenario of the so called modern society. The society which Karl Marx saw with inequality has regained its energy these days hindering and progress. Especially in the selected novels the writer brings out the reason for India's under - development even in this modern century.

Neel Mukherjee in "Neel Mukherjee on Displacement and Desire" says of his choice of writing:

I feel very bleak about history and the human race right now, "Where did we take this wrong turning in history? Late capitalism has not been good for us. I think the whole capitalist order has a lot to answer for. The marriage of liberal democracy and capitalism is coming unstuck. It hasn't worked. Why haven't we got rid of racism in America? Why haven't we got rid of nationalism and intolerance? The only way to deal with it all is to look it in the face and try and write about it and depict it in very unblinking ways. This is what he has brought out in his novels.

(np)

Neel Mukherjee in his novels expresses three types of writing - hyperbolic, exhortative and declamatory. Neel Mukherjee writes about the state of the rich and the poor and the hypocrisies of the aristocrats in general. *A State of Freedom* further shows how inequality itself is unequal as there are differences even among the working

classes. And in *The Lives of Others*, it is seen that sometimes the public do not understand if the naxals are struggling for their welfare or not. They are pushed to a state of denying them. The objectivity of the suffering of the Naxals is lost and is questioned. The author places a satirical note on such cases.

Neel Mukherjee evokes the sense of the world in the readers in which they live in more than his own memory. The voices in his novels are so loud and reaching, and are so lively that they interact with the readers touching them. Personal reflections are well rounded that they provide accurate details on the society. Neel Mukherjee's style of narration makes the readers feel that they are the ones among the sultriness of the struggle of the working class. Neel Mukherjee's novels are open to all variety of audience as it carries different messages to different groups. The hyperbolic attack on the aristocrats will speak to such people awakening their conscience.

Wayne Booth in his *Types of Narration* says, "Narration is an art not a science, but this does not mean that we are necessarily doomed to fail when we attempt to formulate a principle about it. There is systematic element in every art and criticism of fiction can never avoid the responsibility of trying to explain technical successes and failures by reference to general principles" (164). Accordingly Neel Mukherjee has got a unique way of writing. His novels do not stick to the tradition but unfold freely.

Technique is a matter of predominant concern in Neel Mukherjee's novels. Mukherjee has tried to present his themes originally with adjustment and adaptations in spheres of style and point of view. He is a great artist with a remarkable and astounding technical efficacy. He uses easy words but in a rich style which makes his writing professional.

The author with all the outbreak of his emotions and anguish has written these novels desiring a change in the society. It is very important to note that Mukherjee has written on late India in the present century looking at the prevalence of the same old

social evils even today. This frustration and disappointment that nothing has changed in the society with regard to the degradation of various communities is well noticed in the style of his writing. The declaration of his emotions and longing is evident in the selected novels. There is a hidden exhortation in his way of writing, i.e. the author expresses his wish of a change at least in the future. Neel Mukherjee urges Indians to join hands as a force to erase the blots of class and caste on the Indian Democracy. He tries to give an alarm or a warning to the Indians to wake up to heal the nation.

Though times have changed, the class representations have not been eradicated from the Indian frame. The country has not been fully awakened and has not completely been transformed. Though many schemes have been introduced for the betterment of the oppressed, discrimination still haunts them in various forms; class distinction is developed as an inborn attitude of people.

Technological and cyber achievements have improved unimaginably; this is the techno world, the age of space travel, internet and genetic engineering. But these fruits of man's own hands threaten his very existence today. This is the century of invention, in which there are enormous sources of production but less production itself. Science has become a weapon to destroy humans; cyber mode had turned people into techno humans, that each other and treat each other as machine. Education has seen a tremendous growth on the contrary, morality and humanity is totally lost. Billions of lives are stunted by poverty and destroyed by disease. Despite man's power to control the natural world, the society is dominated by insecurity of inequality.

Brinda Bose in the article "The sceptical revolutionary" says of Neel Mukherjee's *The Lives of Others* that the novel is "a realist domestic novel that transforms into a political novel with the help of another aged fictional form, epistolary." She also says, "Mukherjee(literally) enacts the drama of his representation,

ranging his novel between the family and the individual through a continuous juggling of the visible and the invisible, the sound and the silence, the garrulous and the secretive” (np). The novel brings out the revolutionary scepticism through the life of Supratik, a young man from the bourgeoisie who later becomes a naxal.

The author combines the romanticism and objectivity by writing about the dying class and about the bourgeoisie. Alex Peake Tomkinson says in his article “Taking and Grabbing” about Neel Mukherjee’s *The Lives of Others* as, “Mukherjee is dealing with a turbulent period of history and no one can doubt his ambition or the complexity of his story telling. He marshals large cast of mainly unlikeable and destructive people, for the most part deftly, in his difficult book: sprawling, ambitious and imperfect” (np).

Neel Mukherjee in his novel *The Lives of Others* shows how people are forced to be naxals and how they give up emotions and pathos. “In desperate times, I was told the Santhals caught and ate them ...” (240). The novel depicts the extremeness of poverty. The article “The sceptical revolutionary” says,

*The Lives of Others* is a searing, chilling, occasionally tender, sometimes passionate engagement with life’s little and large investments, read through a regional revolutionary uprising. We wish always to make heroes of our revolutionaries, but it is a mark of Mukherjee’s maturity as he produces this, his second novel, set again in Bengal, that he is able to work his way through a far more complex rendering of the youthful urban political rebel and the sometime-suicidal, sometime- genocidal movement that swallows him up in Calcutta. A singular achievement of Mukherjee’s arduous encounter

with Naxalism in this book is his ability to extricate it from a smothering humanist pathos. (8)

Neel Mukherjee brings out the reality of the Indian masses by exploring the psychic depths of the characters. Chapter I of this study gives a note on the Indian English literature, its characteristics and features. It also traces back the history and outgrowth of Marxism on the international platform. This chapter discusses the origin and development of Marxism in India. The chapter also discusses the significant Marxist writers in Indian English literature, their style and techniques of writing. Neel Mukherjee, the author of the selected novels is briefly discussed with the features of the novels and the relevance of his writing to the present era.

Chapter II entitled *Class Conflict: The Sphere of Separation*, is all about the society of India and the inequality prevailing in it. The novels portray the slums and rural setting of the country and show how the working class are degraded and exploited by the upper class. This chapter discusses the lifestyle of the proletariats, the bourgeoisie, the tribes and the naxalites. This chapter shows how the margin between the working class and the bourgeoisie is thickened in various ways.

Chapter III entitled *Degree of Exploitation and the Voices of the Oppressed*, talks about the ways of exploitation. It gives a detailed account of every proletariat in the novel and tells how they are forced to stay inside the shackles of poverty and exploitation. This is a psychological analysis of the oppressed and tells the outer world their depression and lamentation because of the suffering. This makes the readers understand the life of the working class in a better way.

Chapter IV is centred around the *Marxian Phases of Alienation*. This chapter discusses four types of alienation and tells how an individual is alienated from the society, from the workers, from the products of his labour and from himself. The main

purpose of the thesis is to bring out the Marxist themes in Neel Mukherjee's *The Lives of Others* and *A State of Freedom*.

The proletariats in India, still struggle for their own identity, shouting and crying for their own esteem. The oppression of the people is just noticed by the other standards of people as a news or information rather than realising their pain and agony. An attitude of unconcern is seen prominently. Despite the government's schemes, they still fight for their identity and at the least recognition. Awareness to abolish untouchability must be created in the society. This awareness must begin in every Indian home. Crimes against the proletariats should be strictly punished. Indian parents must teach their children to respect their men servants and maids. The system of class must not be introduced to them. They must be taught to mingle with all the children and not to corner any one based on their appearance, language, creed or their societal rankings.

Media is responsible for contributing to this exploitation to some extent. The exaggerated news coverage of domestic violence and the daily soaps divert the attention of the public from the seriousness of the issue. The problem becomes more serious when instead of taking a lesson from the news clippings, films, and television shows, people start practicing the same evils in their homes. Comparatively, the visual media is far more influencing than the print and electronic media in these cases. The mob mentality becomes a great hindrance for the nation's progress in many aspects. Unless this main stream opening breaks out, India will continue to be exploited.

Neel Mukherjee in the article "Neel Mukherjee on Displacement and Desire" says,

I feel very bleak about history and the human race right now,"

Mukherjee says. "Where did we take this wrong turning in history? Late capitalism has not been good for us. I think the whole capitalist order

has a lot to answer for. The marriage of liberal democracy and capitalism is coming unstuck. It hasn't worked. Why haven't we got rid of racism in America? Why haven't we got rid of nationalism and intolerance? The only way to deal with it all is to look it in the face and try and write about it and depict it in very unblinking ways. (np)

Fredrick Douglas in his *Speech on the Anniversary of Emancipation at the Washington D.C* says, "Where Justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor poverty nor property will be safe" (np). The only way to erase the blot of inequality from the Indian soil is that a mainstream awakening of humanity should break out and every individual should realize the need for equality. Frederick Engels in his article "Production and Distribution under Socialism" in *On Socialism* says, "society cannot free itself unless every individual is freed" (40) and Marx in his *Communist Manifesto* says,

Every form of society has been on the antagonism of oppressing and oppressed classes...The modern labourer instead of rising with the process of industry, he becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth. Here it becomes evident that thy bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society . . . Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie, and its existence is no longer compatible with society...(np)

So is the duty of an individual to wake up to protect the constitution and democracy of India.



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