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Postcolonial *Bildungsroman* in India

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**Abstract**

The *Bildungsroman* as a genre poses specific problems for writers from postcolonial nations as the conditions prevailing in the postcolonial nations are incompatible with its embedded Eurocentric bourgeois, imperialist and patriarchal worldviews. Throughout its two hundred years history, the *Bildungsroman* has been identified as European, and more specifically a German novelistic genre. The *Bildungsroman* which originally narrated the growth story of its protagonist who was white, male and, middle class poses problems for the postcolonial writers who are pitted against the uphill task of writing in a genre yet resist its ideologies. The strategies the postcolonial writers adopt and the resultant forms of the genre are some of the concerns of this dissertation. Generic concerns are central to the study of postcolonial literatures in order to understand how the empire writes back to the center. Postcolonial writers have made extensive interventions in European literary genres in their efforts to indigenize them to suit postcolonial subjectivity, themes and conditions. The

*Bildungsroman* has been one such genre which has been a staple of postcolonial novelists. A survey of the Indian English fiction shows that most of the prominent works follow the development of a protagonist in his or her formative years grappling with national, caste, class and religious identity and belonging.

**Keywords:** *Bildungsroman*, Postcolonialism, Appropriation, Abrogation.

Franco Moretti, in the appendix to his wide ranging survey of the European *Bildungsroman* *The Way of the World* (2000), pronounces that the tradition of writing *Bildungsroman* as a mainstream genre became extinct around the period of the First World War (1914-18) as the genre that was based upon ideologically reconciling the individual to the existing social order no longer held the same centrality and relevance as before (228). Moretti states that the trauma of the First World War “introduced discontinuity within

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novelistic temporality, generating centrifugal tendencies toward the short story and the lyric" (244). Thus, the continuity of the novel was replaced by the discontinuity of the short story cycle to articulate new socio-temporal realities of the twentieth century. Further, the disillusionment that prevailed after the war gave rise to the cultural and literal movement of Modernism which shifted the focus away from the exterior world to the interior domain of the characters. The individual's obligation to reconcile his or her aspirations with expectations of society became redundant and irrelevant to Modernism's preoccupation with the alienation of the individual from the group. According to Peter Childs and Roger Fowler, "Modernism's addiction to the revelation of the interior life tended to focus attention away from the social interaction of the individual towards the ineffability of the fractured self" (19). The genre in our times, according to Moretti, doesn't offer a symbolic reconciliation of the tensions between the individual and the group due to the existence of the fragmented and alienated modern self. These changes, Moretti says, has led to the death of a genre which once attracted authors to delve into the conflict of the self and society and its reconciliation.

The dissolution of secure generic boundaries in postmodern times

has further problematized the existence of the *Bildungsroman* and its usefulness as a category of literary classification. A genre study, as a result, has gone out of vogue. In the postmodern fragmented world bereft of definitive categories and universals, genre studies have been viewed as an inadequate approach to literature which is becoming increasingly complex. The postmodern mixing of genres especially poses problems for study of genres in the postmodern era. According to Susan Suleiman, genre studies has been problematized by appropriation, misappropriation, montage, collage, hybridization and general mixing-up of visual and verbal texts and discourses" (191). Despite the fluidity of the borders of literary genres in the postmodern era, genres can still be identified and used as tools of critical analysis. In his essay "Do Postmodern Genre Exist?" Ralph Cohen argues that generic issues are more relevant than ever before and that to successfully engage with generic issues we only have to discard the idea of the genre as discrete categories and water-tight compartments. In fact, the very act of generic dissolution and generic mixing in the postmodern era has made generic considerations all the more important and relevant.

Despite the failure of the *Bildungsroman* after advent of

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Modernism and Postmodernism, the genre's persistence and popularity in postcolonial literature has surprised critics and readers alike. The *Bildungsroman* continues to lure writers all across the globe far beyond boundaries of its nation of origin. The proliferation of the genre in postcolonial literature shows that even in its failure to successfully portray the formation and social integration of the protagonist, the genre fulfills the purpose of the postcolonial writers to scrutinize colonial relationship, resist colonial colonialist worldviews, and decolonize language and culture and to record the impact of colonization on the growing up process. Maria Helena Lima sums up the peculiarities of the persistence of the *Bildungsroman* in postcolonial literature though the following series of questions:

What is it in the *Bildungsroman*, then, a literary form that seems to have outlived its usefulness and become virtually defunct in the European context, that allows it to assume a new and viable identity 'overseas'? Can we trace any similarities between the present historical moment in countries undergoing

decolonization and that which surrounded the earlier *Bildungsroman*? How can we explain that, unlike most European *Bildungsromane*, these post-colonial novels tend to cover a very short time span in the protagonist's life? What is the generic status of the *Bildungsroman*, and what significant problems does the current discourse on the genre raise for conceptualizing post-colonial novels of development? (435)

These issues postulated by Maria Helena Lima are some of the central issues which concern the emergence of the *Bildungsroman* in postcolonial literature and which differentiate its European counterpart.

The Russian philosopher, literary critic and scholar Mikhail Bakhtin "The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism. Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel" enumerates certain characteristics of the *Bildungsroman* which answers some of the questions regarding the emergence of the genre in postcolonial literature. Bakhtin describes the *Bildungsroman* as

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a "novel of emergence" which focuses on "the assimilation of real and historical time and the assimilation of historical man that takes place in that time. (19)" Bakhtin explores "how the image of the main hero is constructed" in order to trace the "image of man in the process of becoming" in the *Bildungsroman* novel (19). In Bakhtin's terminology, "emergence" and "becoming" are synonymous with the term "formation" and the German term "*Bildung*." On the "novel of emergence," Bakhtin postulates:

As opposed to static unity, here one finds a dynamic unity in the hero's image. The hero himself, his character, becomes a variable in the formula of this type of novel. Changes in the hero himself acquire *plot* significance, and thus the entire plot of the novel is reinterpreted and reconstructed. Time is introduced into man, enters into his very image, changing in a fundamental way the significance of all aspects of his destiny and life. This type of novel can be designated in the most

general sense as the novel of human emergence(21).

Bakhtin further classifies the novel of historical emergence to the following five types according to the degree of assimilation of real historical time: the idyllic-cyclical chronotope, the humoristic branch, the biographical and autobiographical type, the didactic-pedagogical type, and the novel of historical emergence, the most significant of all the types. The first two types, according to Bakhtin, are cyclic in nature and present a cyclical emergence. The first type takes the form of an idyllic-cyclical formation of man as he moves "from childhood through youth and maturity to old age." The first is a purely age-oriented novel which is confined to the "changes in a person's nature and views that take place in him as he grows older" (22). The second type too also takes a cyclical pattern but doesn't follow the age of the hero so closely and takes "a typically repeated path of man's emergence from youthful idealism and fantasies to mature sobriety and practicality ... complicated in the end by varying degree of scepticism and resignation" (22). Bakhtin's third type has no relationship to the cyclical and is of the biographical and autobiographical type where the emergence results from the "entire totality of changing life circumstances and events, activity and

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work" (22). The fourth type describes an emergence which is didactic and pedagogical in nature. The emergence of the hero is "based on a specific pedagogical ideal ... [presenting] the pedagogical process of education in the strict sense of the word" (22). Bakhtin's fifth type of *Bildungsroman* differs from the previous four types in that it doesn't present the world merely as a static canvass to paint the emergence and formation of the hero. In the previous four types, hero emerges within an epoch and world which is stable, static and unchanging. In the fifth type, the hero's emergence is no longer an individual affair but is intrinsically linked with the emergence of his world and society. In the words of Bakhtin:

Man's individual emergence is inseparably linked to historical emergence. Man's emergence is accomplished in real historical time, with all of its necessity, its fullness, its future and its profoundly chronotopic nature. In the four preceding types, man's emergence proceeded against the immobile background of the world, ready-made and basically quite stable. If changes

did take place in this world, they were peripheral, in no way affecting its foundations. Man emerged, developed, and changed within one way affecting its foundations. Man emerged, developed, and changed within an epoch. The world existing and stable in its existence, required that man adapt to it that he recognize and submit to the existing laws of life. Man emerged, but the world itself did not. On the contrary, the world was an immobile orientation point for developing man. Man's emergence was his private affair, as it were, and the results of this emergence were also private and biographical in nature. And everything in the world itself remained in its place. In and of itself the conception of the world as an experience, a school, was very productive in the *Bildungsroman*; it presented a different side

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of the world to man, a side that had previously been foreign to the novel. It led to a radical reinterpretation of the elements of the novel's plot and opened up for the novel new and realistically productive points for viewing the world. But the world, as an experience, and as a school, remained the same, fundamentally immobile and ready-made, given. It changed for the one studying in it only during the process of study (in most cases that world turned out to be more impoverished and drier than it had seemed in the beginning) ... [However, in what will be called the realistic novel of emergence, human emergence] is no longer man's own private affair. He emerges along with the world and he reflects the historical emergence of the world itself. He is no longer within an epoch, but on the border between two epochs, at the transition point from

one to the other. This transition is accomplished in him and through him. He is forced to become a new, unprecedented type of human being ... Understandably, in such a novel of emergence, problems of reality and man's potential, problems of freedom and necessity, and the problem of creative initiative rise to their full height. The image of the emerging man begins to surmount its private nature ... and enters into a completely new, spatial sphere of historical existence (22-23).

Bakhtin's true *Bildungsroman* is the fifth type which presents a young man who represents a changing society. Bakhtin makes it clear that the conflict which arises between the individual and his society in the *Bildungsroman* is a manifestation of the need on the part of the individual to change and adjust to changing social conditions. In the 18th century German *Bildungsroman* the change in society was engendered by the emergence of Enlightenment and in the 19th century English *Bildungsroman* the change in society was the advent of the Industrial Revolution. In the case of

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postcolonial *Bildungsroman* it is process of decolonisation. The protagonist's transition from boy to man functions as an allegory of a nation undergoing transformation. The protagonist's formation is no more an isolated private process, but reflects the historical changes and social transformations. The protagonist has to adapt his individuality with a new social and political circumstance of a world which will not change back.

In the postcolonial countries, the protagonist finds himself between the colonial epoch and the post-colonial epoch of their newly independent nations. Despite its brief period, colonial rule by Europeans is epochal in significance. In India, colonial rule roughly lasted two generations. Colonialism in postcolonial nations share the attributes of epochs like Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution. Epochs like Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution introduce massive and lasting social formations. Epochal transitions affect the life and behaviour of all the people who come under its ambit. The sweeping developments that constitute the epoch re-align social forms, structures and processes which require adjustment and adaptation by the individuals. The consequences and effects of colonialism transcend and extend beyond the spatial and temporal

boundaries of colonialism. Postcolonial literature attempts to capture and present the consequences and effects of colonialism and aid the process of decolonization of the culture and society of postcolonial nations. The postcolonial writer's attitude towards his nation and society is distinct from that of the European coloniser. Postcolonial literature, according to EllekeBoehmer, critically scrutinizes colonial relationship:

It is writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspectives. As well as a change in power, decolonization demanded symbolic overhaul, a reshaping of dominant meanings. Postcolonial literature formed part of that process of overhaul. To give expression to colonized experience, postcolonial writers sought to undercut thematically and formally the discourses which supported colonization—the myths of power, the race classifications, the imagery of subordination. Postcolonial literature, therefore, is deeply

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marked by experiences of cultural exclusion and division under empire (Boehmer 3).

The symbolic space of the *Bildungsroman*, thus, becomes a site where the postcolonial writers attempt the symbolic resolutions of political and social conflicts existing in postcolonial societies. In an essay on Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991) Jose Santiago Fernandez Vazquez says that the "*Bildungsroman* has captured the imagination of a large number of postcolonial writers, in spite of the Western origin of the genre and its problematic relationship with a colonialist ethos. In fact, the whole idea of an evolution from childhood to adulthood—that is, from a primitive to a fully developed state of being — constitutes one of the images that has made the colonial enterprise possible" (86). Vazquez's statement echoes the pronouncement of Frederic Jameson regarding the nature of third world literature: "All third-world text are necessarily... allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call national allegories, even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel" (69).

The critic Feroza Jussawalla attributes the reason for the thriving of

the *Bildungsroman* in postcolonial literature, to the genre's ability to represent the individual's engagement with a changing society and emerging nations. According to Jussawalla, "when the postcolonial novelists needed a genre to define the birth of their new nations and to define their experiences in relation to colonialism they chose the genre of the *Bildungsroman* or the novel of 'growing up' to signify their national birth—their nationhood" (30-31). The postcolonial *Bildungsroman* represents the protagonist's movement away from colonial versions of the indigenous culture with simultaneous development of a sense of national identity and belonging. The postcolonial *Bildungsroman* is not a mere coming of age narrative but a growth and awareness of the hero or heroine's individual, national and class identity. The development of the individual identity of the protagonists the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* the novels analysed in this dissertation are inexorably handcuffed with their national and class identity.

The popularity of the genre among Indian writers can be gauged from the fact that all of the Indian Booker Prize winning novels Rushdie's *Midnight's children*, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and



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Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, R. K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends* (1935) present a young boy developing in the context of authoritarian system of colonial education. In *The Bachelor of Arts*, and *The English Teacher*, the protagonist Chandran and Krishna grow from boys to men among life's happiness and sorrows in the fictional town of Malgudi. In the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, growth is a privilege which is not extended to all sections of society. In Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie* Munoo's journey from his village to the city of Bombay in search of livelihood ends in suffering, poverty and premature death which shows that the dream of growth of maturity is unreachable for the poor and downtrodden in a colonial country.

Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* are *Bildungsroman* novels in which the protagonist grows to an identity of himself as a indigenous self. In *Midnight's Children* (1981), Sleem Sinai's growth and development by virtue of his being born at the stroke of midnight on August 15 becomes the story of the growth and development of independent India. Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (1991) is another novel located in the *Bildungsroman* genre, which presents a young Parsi girl Lenny grow up amidst

Hindu-Muslim communalism in undivided India. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is about the coming of age of a pair of twins as they identify with their home state Kerala despite their disillusionment with the Communist-dominated government.

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003) is the *Bildungsroman* of Gogol, an American, who grows up in an immigrant household and suffers intra-personal conflicts due to his hybrid racial identity which is symbolized by his weird name. For the female protagonist, the promise of *Bildung* is more elusive as their identity emerges after an unhappy marriage and motherhood as in Nayantara Sahgal's *The Day in Shadow*. Anita Desai's female *Bildungsroman* Sita, in her novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* finds her selfhood through rejection of her daughter. Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* is the story of hardships of its protagonist Rukmani whose growth is lost amidst natural disasters, poverty, and hostility. Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* is a *Bildungsroman* about a young man whose detachment and alienation transcends geographical, national and cultural boundaries. G. V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* is the *Bildung* of its mad hero's absurd journey towards growth and maturity through a quest for the meaning of life

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from the Seven Sages of India, who turn out to be deadlier than the seven sins. Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English August* presents the career of a young anglophile AgastyaSen's youthful angst in his administrative career as a civil servant.

Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* charts the troubled growth of its protagonist in the tumultuous years of partition and afterwards. Amit Chaudhuri's *A Strange and Sublime Address* and *Afternoon Raag* are examples of fractured *Bildungsroman*. Rohit Manchanda's *In the Light of the Black Sun* is a *Bildungsroman* set in the coal-districts of Bihar whereas Pankaj Mishra's *The Romantics* is the formation of a young Brahmin boy in Benaras. Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* is about the effects of an industrial disaster on the development of a young boy named Janwar who is born disabled and walks on all fours due to the persisting effects of the Union Carbide gas tragedy in Bhopal. Akhil Sharma's *Family Life* (2014) charts the development of its eight year old protagonist as he grows along with his elder brother who has suffered a life-changing accident. The accident curtails the *Bildung* of the Sharma's protagonist as he grows around his brother in pain and guilt. The postcolonial *Bildungsroman* most often than not is not about hopes and dreams but fear and nightmares. Abdullah

Khan's *Patna Blues* narrates the story of a muslim young man who wants to be a civil servant but gets infatuated by an elderly married Hindu lady and loses his life in the religious conflict. Jhimli Mukherjee-Pandey's *Not Just Another Story* narrates the growth of Lakshmi trapped in an hopeless cycle of sexual labour in Kolkata's red-light district Sonagachi and his eventual transformation into an astute, beautiful and ambitious high-class escort, now called Anjali.

In African countries, the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* appeared later than that of India. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and J. M. Coetzee's *The Life and Times of Michael K.* (1983) narrate the growth of their protagonist and their self-realization under the oppressive colonial regimes of political intolerance. Nadine Gordimer's *Burger's Daughter* (1979) unfolds the story of its young female protagonist's evolution of identity during the turbulent times of anti-apartheid political movement of South Africa.

In Caribbean literature, V. S. Naipaul chose the genre of *Bildungsroman* to write his novel *A House for Mar. Biswas* (1961). Naipaul's novel is an individual's struggle for place in a world and his authentic selfhood which is tragically and unsatisfactorily

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fulfilled with his owning of a house at the end of the novel. The house, in the novel, is symbolic of an Indian immigrant's desire to claim his identity by owning a permanent residence and find roots in a new land. Biswas is representative of the Hindu community which struggles to find its roots in the postcolonial society of Trinidad in transition. George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953), is another *Bildungsroman* story of tragic innocence amid the collapse of colonial rule. The proliferation of the genre in postcolonial literature shows that despite, postmodernism's cynicism towards fixed and stable subjectivity which renders a serious ideological blow to the relevance of the *Bildungsroman*, contemporary postcolonial writers appear intent on redeveloping it for the twenty-first century rather than dispense with the genre altogether.

The postcolonial writers who have appropriated the genre in the twentieth century have transformed the nature, scope and function to suit specific political, social and economic ends. The postcolonial *Bildungsroman* makes so many departures, additions and reconceptualization's of the traditional *Bildungsroman* that it is sometimes questioned whether they can be classified under the rubric of the genre. This new writing of the *Bildungsroman*

has to negotiate between the ideological baggage of the genre and the needs of the postcolonial countries. The postcolonial *Bildungsroman* novels defies the universality of the traditional *Bildungsheld* and deflates the grand promise of formation and progress by highlighting social inequalities, oppressive schooling, fractured nationhood, and hybridity prevailing in postcolonial societies. Such novels which undermine and subvert the value system and norms of the genre are referred to by some critics as anti-*Bildungsroman* or counter-*Bildungsroman*. Most of the postcolonial novels which present the formation of its hero or heroine can be placed under this rubric which may be taken to be a sub-genre of the *Bildungsroman*.

The concept of the anti-*Bildungsroman* was introduced in an 1974 essay by Gerhart Mayer in his essay "Zum Deutschen Anti-*Bildungsroman*" ["On the German Anti-*Bildungsroman*"], in which she argues that the anti-*Bildungsroman* novel begins like a traditional *Bildungsroman* and follows the general plot structure of an individual's journey towards self-development and social acceptance, but culminates in the individual's ultimate failure to achieve any growth, change or social accommodation.

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Todd Kontje posits that the anti-*Bildungsroman* acts as a "critical corrective to the deficits of contemporary concepts of *Bildung*" (91). The anti-*Bildungsroman* novel appropriates the elements of the traditional *Bildungsroman* without participating in the ideology associated with the traditional *Bildungsroman*. The traditional *Bildungsroman* hinges on the balance between the public and the private and the compromise between the individual and the society. In the anti-*Bildungsroman*, the balance is tilted against the individual who suffers suppression, failure, frustration at the hands of a hostile and unaccommodating society.

The blame for the failure of the formation of the protagonist in the European anti-*Bildungsroman* is attributed to the protagonist's weaknesses in character which render him or her unworthy and unsuitable for any kind of growth, maturity and social integration which is promised by the traditional *Bildungsroman*. The protagonist is left in a state as he or she was at the beginning of the narrative which leads to disappointment for reader who expects the fullest possible formation of the protagonist. In the postcolonial anti-*Bildungsroman*, the blame for the failure of hero's or heroine's *Bildung* is placed on the

colonial and postcolonial society rather than the hero or heroine. In this type of anti-*Bildungsroman*, the novel follows the plot structure of the traditional *Bildungsroman*, and the protagonist fails to achieve his or her desired growth not due to a flaw in character or an error in judgement, but due to the inequalities, oppression and hybridity, and hypocrisy of colonial and postcolonial society. Sometimes the society's expectations are too high that they cannot be sustained, or the basic social principle is flawed, discriminatory, and unjustified, or society prevents the protagonist's access to political freedom and economic resources. Sometimes the protagonist is not only caught in a stasis, but also undergoes a regression to an earlier and less advanced stage of development.

The postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, according to Bonnie Hoover Braedlin, "asserts an identity defined by the outsiders themselves or by their own cultures [and] evinces a revaluation, a transvaluation, of traditional *Bildung* by new standards and perspectives" (75). Braedlin further notes that the postcolonial writers appropriate the *Bildungsroman* with an intention to present "the particular identity and adjustment problems of people [whose identity] renders them unacceptable to the dominant society" (75). The postcolonial *Bildungsroman*,

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Braedlin postulates, is not just a novel of formation of identity, but also a "record of an abrupt redefinition of personality, achieved not as a result of arduous interaction with environment, but in a moment of existential choice that many actually repudiate the goal, as well as the concept of gradual self-development" (77).

The traditional *Bildungsroman* assumes the existence of the sovereign subject of First World nations who has not be marginalized, or completely omitted by the mainstream society. David Bederman in his book *International Law Frameworks*, defines a sovereign subject as a subject who "answers to its own [internal] order and is not accountable to a larger ... community, save only to the extent it has consented to do so" (50). Such a sovereign subject possesses the right to determine his actions and how he is acted upon through his journey to maturity which is the expression of his sovereign status. The hero in the traditional *Bildungsroman* doesn't have to strive for sovereignty nor is his sovereignty threatened by society. The hero of the traditional *Bildungsroman* challenges the sovereignty of society by a self-imposed exile, but at the end of his journey the hero compromises with the sovereignty of society for his social integration and acceptance. The exile of the hero in a traditional *Bildungsroman*

is a momentary escape from the sovereignty of the society which he has to accept ultimately at the end of the journey. The compromise struck at the end of the traditional *Bildungsroman* is in reality a compromise of the sovereignty of the individual and the society, wherein the individual sacrifices a certain degree of sovereignty in lieu of social acceptance and integration. In the colonial *Bildungsroman*, the acceptance and integration depends on the relinquishment of indigenous identity on the part of the colonial subject and acceptance of the inferiority of the indigenous culture and superiority of the colonizer's culture.

The process of *Bildung* of the hero of the traditional *Bildungsroman* consists of a two stage process: (1) self-imposed alienation followed by (2) a personal adjustment and accommodation. The process of *Bildung* is set off by the hero's decision to separate from society in the traditional *Bildungsroman*. In the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, this option to separate from society is not available to the individual. The hero of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* is either separated from the mainstream society by virtue of his birth, forced to abandon his society out of compulsion or fails in his attempt to separate from society and pursue his individuality. The choice to separate

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from society to pursue one's individuality which is available to the protagonist of the traditional *Bildungsroman* is not available to the protagonist of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*. In the novels analysed in this thesis, Swami's attempt to alienate himself from the society of Malgudi ends in failure. Munoo is forced into exile by his Uncle and Aunt who are unable to take care of him due to poverty. Saleem is alienated after his true parentage is revealed to the Sinai's. Hatterr's miscegenated identity obstructs his assimilation in society both in England and India. In the case of neoliberal *Bildungsroman*, the membership in the dominant society is achieved at the cost of disconnecting with one's native and traditional culture. Balram Halwai and Ram Mohammad, two protagonists of two *Bildungsroman* from India's neoliberal era, pursue membership in the affluent society of India at the cost of their native, indigenous and traditional roots.

The compromise or accommodation which is achieved between the individual and society at the end of the traditional *Bildungsroman* is non-existent in the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*. In the traditional *Bildungsroman*, this compromise takes the nature of closest possible tradeoff between the individual and social

expectations. Each party relinquishes some degree of sovereignty over the other in order to achieve a compromise. On one hand society exercises greater degree of sovereignty over the individual and controls the actions, rights and choices of the individual, on the other the individual has the freedom not to obey the norms set by society.

The society in the traditional *Bildungsroman* is benign which shapes and nurtures the self of the protagonist like a potter who needs his clay. The society in the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* is hypocritical, corrupt, inhuman, and hostile. In the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* the individual doesn't possess any freedom to disobey the norms set by society. The individual's disobedience is met with ostracization, alienation and deprivation. The balance of power is tilted against the individual in the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* and as a result the individual is rendered powerless and deprived of any agency to oppose social norms.

In the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* the relationship between individual and the society becomes complicated when issues of caste, class, religion and gender influence the relationship to a lot of extent. In the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, the society is patriarchal, imperialist and Eurocentric in its outlook and ideals. In

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such a society, there is no compromise as the society always has an upper hand and the individual is bound to follow its laws and norms. The postcolonial *Bildungsroman* presents protagonists who are unable to defy social laws and norms due to the uncompromising stance of colonial and postcolonial society. The postcolonial *Bildungsroman* realizes a critique of colonial and postcolonial society through the failure of the process of *Bildung* and regression of its protagonist.

The choices which are available to the protagonist of the traditional *Bildungsroman* is not available to the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* in the colonial, postcolonial or neocolonial era. The apparent choice exercised by the protagonist in the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* is not a choice at all. The protagonist's choice in the postcolonial context is undermined by the existence of discrimination, oppression and deprivation. The protagonist faces conflict between the indigenous culture and colonial culture at the intra-personal level as well as inter-personal level. The conflict is so great and intense that any compromise and resolution is impossible in the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*. The postcolonial *Bildungsroman* is a manifestation of the precarious position of the postcolonial subject and their unachievable attempts at a viable

identity without assimilating into the colonial culture. In the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, choice is a goal for the protagonist as they grow up without any choices, their decisions being taken by others. If at all there is any choice available for the protagonist, it is very limited and the difficult to obtain. The protagonist of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* is burdened with the pain of his colonial past and the problems of its postcolonial present.

The failure of the hero in the postcolonial anti-*Bildungsroman* raises complex issues regarding the hero, the text and the reader. Especially, it raises questions about the reasons behind the failure of the hero. The postcolonial anti-*Bildungsroman* throws light on the manner a society rejects and thwarts the attempts of the protagonist for acceptance.

In the case, of the postcolonial anti-*Bildungsroman*, colonialism engenders the hostility and rejection of the protagonist who challenges the colonial order. Further, identity crisis arising from colonial hybridity and ambivalence accounts for the failure of the formation of the selfhood of the protagonist. Munoo, Swami, Saleem and Hatterr do not achieve successful *Bildung* like Wilhelm Meister, David Copperfield and Jane Eyre due to hostility and antagonism of the rigid

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colonial and postcolonial societies which refuse to accommodate any individual transgression of the social order. The universal claims of the ideology of the traditional *Bildungsroman* are deflated by the realities of the colonial and postcolonial societies which obstruct the journey of their protagonist's towards maturity, growth and self-realization. The postcolonial anti-*Bildungsroman* indicates that grand enlightenment concept of the harmonious development of the individual depends not only on the strengths and weakness of the individual personality but also on the social realities.

The readership of the traditional *Bildungsroman* consisted of middle class readers who found in the narrative the confirmation of the bourgeois values. The protagonist of the traditional *Bildungsroman* struggled with the issues like family, neighborhood, class, caste, religion and ethical milieu which are familiar to the middle classes. The traditional *Bildungsroman* was a status quoist conservative genre which vindicated the values and ideals of the established order and shows the way to live in a world which was changing rapidly. The narrative of the traditional *Bildungsroman* showed the dangers of deviation from the socially accepted norms and show that a protagonist who challenged the societal framework beyond that allowed by society had no

place to go and few people willing to accept him. The genre presents a society which welcomes and rewards the protagonist with prosperity and happiness that is willing to compromise his or her goals with the societal framework.

The *Bildungsroman's* didactic functions lay in the strong messages which appealed to the deeply embedded middle-class values of the reader. The genre also embodied realistic and practical messages which reader strongly associated in order to make sense of a world which was in a flux.

The *Bildungsroman* in the Indian context presents peculiar problems due to the social structure of Indian society. Collectivism has been the dominant paradigm of Indian society since time immemorial. In postcolonial societies such as India, the individual does not exist as distinct and independent from the community. The individual is incomplete without an active engagement with the society and culture of which he or she is a part. The colonial intervention more often than not has complicated and problematized the connection between the individual and society.

The culture of a nation is founded upon a system of values, beliefs



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and preferences that are common to residents of a country and determines the manner the members of the culture think and behave. Indian society has been found to be collectivistic, the self being identified with the community, whereas as Westerners are individualistic, the self being distinct from the community. Individualism, as manifest in its Western forms, is alien to Indian society. The classical model of the *Bildungsroman* genre with its emphasis on individualist development and ultimate social-political integration is alien to Indian culture and society which has been collectivist since time immemorial.

The collectivist nature of Indian society started to change after global capitalistic forces entered after India introduced the Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG) reforms of 1991 in order to qualify for a much-needed loan from the International Monetary Fund. The economic reforms unleashed the forces of economic, sociological and cultural globalization in India. The reforms lead to creation of greater number of jobs, more choices to consumers, and higher disposable incomes. On negative impact of the reform was that it lead to the shrinkage of agricultural sector which affected rural livelihoods.

The neoliberal reforms and global capitalism further injected a

culture of individualism which has altered the social fabric of India. People in individualist societies put their self-interest first and society second, people in collectivistic societies, place community interests and community harmony above individual freedom and success.

The *Bildungsroman* novels written after the economic reforms in India after 1991 take a different trajectory than the *Bildungsroman* before 1991 and enters the neoliberal phase in its evolution in Indian English fiction, which can be labelled the neoliberal *Bildungsroman*. The neoliberal forces of global capitalism and consumerism transformed Indian society and culture and established a new relationship between the individual and the society.

In the neoliberal *Bildungsroman*, the protagonist uncritically and unquestioningly absorbs the ideology and norms of a global capitalistic forces and is rewarded with affluence, power and fame. In the neoliberal *Bildungsroman* pursuit of material and monetary success takes precedence over issues of identity, nationhood, family, religion or caste.

The neoliberal *Bildungsroman* which emerges in the 21st century also relies on the submission of the individual to a neoliberal society, at the expense of

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their family, community and identity. In the pre-1991 *Bildungsroman*, the protagonists refused, opposed and protested against the dominant culture, and did not submit to the society without a struggle. In the neoliberal *Bildungsroman*, the protagonists assimilate and comply easily and seamlessly the neoliberal and global capitalistic norms and values. The success of colonialism and imperialism rested on the acceptance of the colonial culture by the indigenous and native populace. Neoliberalism and global capitalism which is sometimes called neocolonialism and considered the extension of colonialism of the 20th century into the 21st, also depends for its success the acceptance of its norms, values and ideals over indigenous norms, values and ideals.

The neoliberal *Bildungsroman* which emerges in the 21st century also relies on the submission of the individual to a neoliberal society, at the expense of their family, community and identity. In the pre-1991 *Bildungsroman*, the protagonists refused, opposed and protested against the dominant culture, and didn't comply without a struggle. In the neoliberal *Bildungsroman*, the protagonists assimilate and comply easily and seamlessly with the neoliberal and global capitalistic forces. The success of colonialism and imperialism

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