

POSTMODERN DELHI: A VIEW THROUGH SOME NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

Postmodern Delhi has been writing itself voluminously. This paper presents a survey of the Delhi novel- a genre that saw a boom coinciding with economic liberalization of the 1980s and is brimming with more and more literature in the global postmodern ethos of today. The paper explores objectives, tropes, themes, voices and locations inscribed in this city based cultural production. The study is not just recommends must-read postmodern Delhi novels, but also examines the writers' postmodern subjectivity that coalesces and collides with Delhi urbanity and spatiality. The narratives that so emerge are winding, groping, finding, hiding, and ultimately inconclusive, like the city itself. Postmodern Delhi, thus, becomes an active agent in shaping the structure and thematics of these novels. Straddling the urban schisms of proximity vs. remoteness, belongingness vs. loneliness, community living vs. blasé anonymity, affluence vs. poverty, center vs. periphery, civicism vs. alienation, opportunity vs. monopoly and many such structural and existential dichotomies splintered all over the urban landscape, writings by campus goers, new migrants, old Delhiwallah gentry, expats, gated communities- all attempts to vanquish the hydra-headed monster of the maximum city.

KEYWORDS: *Postmodern Delhi, Delhi Novel, Delhi Culture, Global City, Campus Novel*

INTRODUCTION

What is postmodern Delhi? Postmodern Delhi is a global city. A 'global city' plays a significant role in global affairs in socioeconomic terms. The term 'global city' was used by sociologist Saskia Sassen in her work *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Sassen, 1991) who preferred the over earlier used terms like 'world city' or 'informational city'. The term represents chiefly the contemporary spatial-economic order from where globalization is created and enacted through global systems of finance and commerce. 'Global city' status is determined today by many surveys (for example, GaWC, AT Kearney, Chicago Council) that attempt to classify and rank cities. Standard characteristics which primarily make cities compete for these rankings comprise of the presence of a variety of international financial services, especially in finance, insurance, real estate, banking, accountancy, and marketing and headquarters of several multinational corporations. Using relational data, Jon Beaverstock, Richard G. Smith and Peter J. Taylor made the first attempt in 1998 to define, categorize and rank global cities while working at the Loughborough University (United Kingdom). They established the Globalization and World Cities Research Network (GaWC) which published a roster of world cities in the *GaWC Research Bulletin* 5 ranking cities on the basis of their connectivity through four "advanced producer services": accountancy, advertising, banking/finance, and law. The GaWC inventory identifies three levels of global cities and several sub-ranks as given below:

- Alpha++ cities (like London and New York) are more influential in the global economy than all other cities.
- Alpha+ cities support Alpha++ cities by providing advanced services.
- Alpha and Alpha- cities serve as major economic bridges in the world economy.
- Beta, gamma and sufficiency level cities are cities that link moderate, small and subsistence level economic regions respectively.

GaWC has issued latest rankings in 2016. New Delhi ranks of Alpha- in this roster. In 2008, the American journal *Foreign Policy*, in conjunction with the Chicago-based consulting firm A.T. Kearney and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs (CCGA) index examines the city's performance on the parameters of business volume, human resource, information technology, culture, and politics. Here Delhi has spiraled down from ranking 41 in 2008 to ranking 61 in 2016. Mike Hales, a partner at AT Kearney and one of the authors of the Global Cities report observes about New Delhi:

New Delhi would do well to continue to focus on improving information exchange through increasing access to the internet for its citizens and continue to improve in news agencies and Google presence. In the political engagement, the city ranks at number 10, rising from number 35 in 2008. This is a testament to the capital city's internationalization. New Delhi excels in think tanks and embassies and consulates...

Veronique Dupont in 'Dream of Delhi as a Global City' (2011), explains the term global city is inadequately applied to South East Asian or post-colonial cities are "cities in transition", and globalization is a 'work in progress' Shaw (2007). "Cities in. Thus, the term "globalizing city" used by Marcuse and Van Kempen (2000) and Sandhu and Sandhu (2007) is more valid for a city like Delhi. (Dupont, 2011, p. 535) This is because Delhi might not conform to Friedmann and Sassen's theorization, but does display widespread effects of globalization. Dupont writes,

Delhi is not a hub of international finance, yet, since the 1990s, it has displayed its ability to interact with other global cities. Like other large Indian metropolises, it provides the global market with some direct investment opportunities and outsourced services. Hence, some scholars argue that Delhi could be considered a new type of global city, fitted into a network of complex flows, mobilizing information and communication technologies, and increasingly using the internet. (Dupont, 2011: 541)

A pursuit of 'global city' framework ideas has today become mandatory for city planners and managers resulting in inequitable development of global outreach sectors and infrastructural investment chiefly for the aspirational middle classes and trans-national population. Thus, urban skyline of skyscrapers, shopping malls, business centers, gated communities, and superhighways emerges to announce the arrival of modernity. This spectacular urbanity in Delhi can be seen in places like Gurgaon and NOIDA with their mushrooming of expensive residential complexes with foreign sounding names, complete with upmarket commercial, recreational, health and educational facilities. Huge swanky airport, flagship metro projects, Games and festivals, starred hotels, entertainment parks and even temples (Akshardham)- all fit together to construct the 'global city'. Needless to say, it gives rise to what has been called "socio-spatial disorder". (Banerjee-Guha, 2002) Vishnu Prasad (2013) builds an interesting comparison between the fate of Istanbul and the fate of Delhi. Delhi as well as Istanbul generates contentious and polarizing claims on the city. In attempting to make Delhi and Istanbul global cities; the state ends up pushing the ordinary citizens, the immigrants, "the quasi-visible proletariat who lubricate the city's burgeoning service sector" to the invisible ill-equipped margins in the city. As they imitate the concept

of the global city, cities like Delhi and Istanbul simultaneously deprive even basic amenities to a majority of their inhabitants. Postmodern cities are complex not just in terms of being global cities, but complexity has entered all walks of city life. City life is a summation of all the processes of the third urban revolution, unprecedented formal intricacy, diverse lifestyles and belief systems and hectic political activity.

METHODOLOGY

Delhi's tryst with postmodernity commences post liberalization in the 1980s. The visual and demographic character of the city underwent a rapid change. The geographical unit of the city transformed the conurbation called the National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCTD) covering 1483 sq. kilometers. The urban spilled into the peripheral towns (e.g NOIDA and Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh and Faridabad, Gurgaon, Bhiwani, Rewari, Bahadurgarh in Haryana) necessitating the establishment of the National Capital Region (NCR) Planning Board in 1996. In 1991, the Union Territory of Delhi attained the status of a quasi-state. In 1996, NCTD further expanded to National Capital Region (NCR). In 2018, NCR's population has crossed the 27 million mark. The postmodern, the neo-liberal and the globe are responsible for the pluralism and hybridity of what Soja called the post-metropolis in Delhi. This character is visible in the language and literature being produced in/on Delhi. Language and culture become offshoots of socio-linguistic and socio-cultural intermingling of mobile resources engendering a boundary-defying, critical and alternative discourse that questions the very idea of a dominant culture and a unique canon. (Rubdy, Rani and Lubna Alsgoff, 2014) This character is manifest in the plurality of genres, linguistic variety, locations, identities and intersections embedded in the contemporary literature in/ on Delhi. The quality and volume of literature on/ in Delhi has been steadily burgeoning over the years. Though 'Delhi novel' is not an established genre like the 'Bombay novel' is, yet if one examines and explores the many cultural micro-narratives speaking through the many Delhis that cohabit one geographical space, a case can certainly be built for a serious coinage and usage of this term and genre. Narayani Gupta wonders, "Where is the 'south Indian' who will write a story set in the India Coffee House, where is the Jamia, DU or JNU novel?" (Gupta, 2008) Dalrymple is also perplexed by the fact that "... Delhi has been at the center of India's history for at least 1,000 years (closer to 4,000 if you believe the stories about Indraprastha), it's amazing that there isn't a whole library of fine literature--academic and non-academic--about the city." (Dalrymple, 2008). Keeping in view the postmodern complexity and plurality of the city of Delhi, and the proliferation of narratives on the one hand and dearth of enough and defining material on the other, the paper attempts to profile some genres that constitute and articulate the essence and experience of postmodern Delhi.

SURVEY AND DISCUSSIONS

The Campus Novel

Postmodern Delhi is writing a lot of 'the campus novel'. The three campuses which are especially profusely written from Delhi are Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, Delhi University (DU) and Jawahar Lal Nehru University (JNU). The IIT (D) has had serial chroniclers like Chetan Bhagat (*Fives Point Someone*, 2004), Amitabh Bagchi (*Above Average*, 2007), and Tushar Raheja (*Anything For You Ma'am: the love story of an IITian*, 2006). Neeraj Chibba's *Zero Percentile: Missed IIT, Kissed Russia* (2009), Suman Hossain's *A Guy Thing...A Magical Love Story of an IITian* (2008), Saamil Shrivastava's *A Roller Coaster Ride - When An IITian Met a Bitsian Girl* (2010) and S V Divaakar's *The Winner's Price: Life Beyond the Campus* (2012) also make for very interesting reading. The other two campuses have not exploited so much the immense commercial potential of campus life. However, the institutions are slowly but surely

warming up to telling their tales. Sachin Garg's *A Sunny Shady Life* (2009) has Sunny Singh- DCE (Delhi College of Engineering) student as its protagonist. Rita Joshi's *The Awakening- A Novella in Verse* (1993) views the academic life in India from a lecturer's point of view. Anuradha Marwah Roy's novel *The Higher Education of Geetika Mehendiratta* (1993) catalogs the trials and tribulations of young aspirants in the academia. Manju Kapoor's *Home* (2006) takes us through Daulat Ram College as she charts the course of her female protagonist Nisha's life. *JNU: Sunthing Of A Mocktale* by Soma Das (200 is the quintessential JNU novel penned by its alumni. In the same series is Avijit Ghosh's *Up Campus Down Campus* (2016). **The two books cast a look at JNU politics and culture. A huge success among the alumni, students and admission seekers, the novels together seem to take the University as a microcosm of the country and its future.**

Stephania

Delhi University has been the bedrock of a literary Renaissance of sorts producing what has christened the Stephanian School of Literature. Amitav Ghosh, Rukun Advani, Mukul Kesavan and Shashi Tharoor are some famous exponents. Leela Gandhi dubs the Stephanian School of Literature (or SSL) as "nothing more than an interesting accident". (Gandhi, 1997) It is impossible, however, not to concede that the elite, diasporic, witty, cosmopolitan, and privileged ex-Stephanian has been the torchbearer in Indian writing in English. The Stephanian repertoire represents the middle class politics and culture of dominant forms and emergent nation. Tharoor associates elitism, Anglophilia and depreciation with this cultural production. (Tharoor, 2005, p. 220) To these, one should also add masculinity. (Bose, 2000) Tharoor accepts that Stephania inspired him greatly, imparting faith in "all-inclusive, multanimous, free-thinkingcultures". (Tharoor, 2005: 223):

Whether or not there is an SSL, there is certainly a spirit that can be called Stephenian: after all, I spent three years living in and celebrating it. Stephania was both an ethos and a condition to which we aspired. (Tharoor, 2005: 220)

Thus, with the emergence of Delhi as a bustling educational hub hosting students from not just India but all over the world, it has started being documented voluminously from the campuses. Life on campus is a very impressionable phase in a person's bildungsroman or kunstlerroman. Therefore, these narratives pulsate with the raw poignancy of youth and the dreams of future city dwellers. The cut-throat competitive city and society, deeply etched divides and rivalries, highly idealized and romanticized academia, the trans-national and trans-cultural roller coaster of unbridled diversity, the humor and satire of College encounters are all the stuff that memories, careers and personalities are made of. It is a time characterized by locations, dislocation and relocations- the city forms an important part of all of these.

New Locations

The changing "schizoid" character of Delhi has been noted by scholars of Development Studies like Dr. Sanjay Kumar. (Kumar, 2013: 117) Traditional values clash against global forces and cultures "overlap, merge, interact and assimilate". Accordingly, he feels that "The city of Delhi needs a new definition" (Kumar, 2013, p. 117). The age-old twin-city has stretched to three cities in one: 'the central city', "trans-Yamuna" and the peripheries. These new pockets of settlements begin to speak in literature of/ from this city. Amitabha Bagchi's *Above Average* (2007) is the first novel that encapsulates the new middle class constellation of group housing societies of Indraprastha Extension and Mayur Vihar. The novel maps a new urban ethos, all the while debunking notions of centrality and elitism in Delhi.

Interested in tracing two phenomena in particular, viz. “How the middle class views itself, and how the internal lives of people are affected by the landscapes they inhabit”, Bagchi also heralds new landmarks in the narrative imagination of Delhi (Bagchi, 2011). Describing the “clouds of dust”, “stray dogs”, “small dark children in torn vests and colored shorts”, “pawn shop”, “a patch of dust” meant to have been a park, “foreign liquor shop”, “evening hawkers” and “large open drain which marks the western boundary of Mayur Vihar phase 1”, Bagchi brings to life the evolution of “Trans-Yamuna”. Bagchi writes,

Several waves of people were to spill out of Delhi to what is called the Trans-Yamuna by those who live west of the river and East Delhi by those who live east of it. The first wave was the ‘resettled’ slum dwellers of Delhi, housed in the riot-prone warren called Trilok Puri. The second was of people certified to be part of the ‘middle income group’ by the Delhi Development Authority. This certification was accompanied by the privilege of inhabiting one of hundreds of dirty yellow concrete boxes that the DDA collectively named Mayur Vihar. The third wave was the Society dwellers. (Bagchi, 2007: 32)

Arindam Chatterjee, the protagonist, like Bagchi, washes up on the Yamuna flood plains riding the third wave. As such, the Co-operative Group Housing Society (CGHS) bylaws are designed to create islands of homogeneity fostering neo-identities. Two other localities figure in this new conglomeration of habitats- Mandawali and Preet Vihar. The former is dominated by the cattle herders and milk sellers (also feared later as bandit brigands) living of your in the villages of East Delhi. The latter is the new baroque world of the affluent “kothis” and mansions. Trans-Yamuna or East Delhi, thus, becomes a melting pot of urban and demographic shifts best understood as “peri-urbanization: the formation of ‘mixed spaces’, midway between urban centers and rural spaces, transitional spaces subject to multiple transformations—physical, morphological, socio-demographic, cultural, economic and functional” (Dupont, 2005, p. 10) While the “mixed spaces” are locked in almost a primordial kind of conflict as if the natives sought revenge on the conquistadors for dispossessing them, they also bring about democratization in human relationships of a type not conceivable in bureaucratic conclaves.

Old locations: New Interiority

Along with new localities around the literary block, but old ones also don millennial hats of postmodernity. Navtej Sarna’s *We Weren’t Lovers Like That* (2003) looks at Delhi through the moody inferiority of its protagonist. Sarna did his schooling from Delhi’s Frank Anthony Public School and Dehradun’s St. Joseph’s School. He earned a graduate degree in commerce from Sri Ram College of Commerce, joined the Law Faculty for LL.B. Degree, followed by a diploma in journalism to eventually build a career in the Indian Foreign Service in 1980. Sarna lived largely in Delhi, but started to feel like an alien in the city. “But today I feel a sense of loss for Delhi that was a few decades ago,” he says. (Sarna, n.d.) In *We Weren’t Lovers Like That*, as Aftab turns forty, his fifteen years old marriage falls apart. The lanes and by-lanes of Delhi are steeped in his many moments and metaphors. Connaught Place, the iconic hotspot and the centerpiece of the Capital, is represented through the eyes of Aftab clouded with misery and rejection. The inner and outer struggle gets inextricably tied to each other. About Connaught Place, Aftab says, “generally speaking, a lousy place. It is one of the lousiest places in Delhi; in fact, it is the lousy centre of what has become, for the most part, a lousy city” (Sarna, 2003: 22). This is a Delhi embroiled in the postmodern where micro-narratives of self penetrate the dogmatic meta-narratives to bring out idiosyncratic alterity of places.

Sarnath Banerjee's graphic novel *Corridor* also looks at Connaught Place inside out. Sarnath Banerjee was born in Calcutta in 1972. Having studied the image and communication at Goldsmiths College, University of London, he now lives and works in Delhi, India. The Kafkaesque narrative of *Corridor* meanders into New as well as Old through four oddball characters—Jehangir Rangoonwala, Brighu, Digital Dutta and Shinto. Note to an exhibition showcasing Banerjee's work describes *Corridor* as a “journey through fragile post-colonial spaces in the metropolises New Delhi and Calcutta that are almost unknown in the West.” The novel can be seen as a postmodern take on “fragmented realities in the cities of the subcontinent; (to bring) the past and the present in relation, in order to examine stereotypes, myths and morality in post-colonial India.”

(Retrieved from http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/nafas/articles/2005/time_and_space/photos/banerjee_1) Reminiscing about Delhi, Banerjee says, “There was this feeling of stumbling about in the city, waiting for things to happen, like the characters in the book *Corridor*....So there existed a very colorful world. You just had to step outside and there were stories waiting for you in each and every corner.” (Retrieved from <http://kyoorius.com/2014/01/story-boxes-sarnath-banerjee/#sthash.jaqnUU5t.dpuf>) Most of his characters and stories emanate from these known, yet unknown, corners.

Margins and Peripheries

Jet City Woman (2007) by Ankush Saikia follows “the circuit of desire, drugs, violence, and greed that exists at the fringes of Delhi” and “casts light on the lives that have so far been peripheral to the grand narrative of this city—students from northeast India, Tibet and Afghan refugees, Anglo-Indians”. (Saikia, 2007) A tumultuous love story of a young student from Shillong and mysterious Naina, it unearths the ugly face of urban Delhi pockmarked with hazy careers and dreams. The dotcom bubble, the BPO industry, the retail and hospitality segments, sell pipe dreams to the girls and boys of the northeast who throng the city. The “mercurial Naina” embodies the city itself. She is inscrutable and unshakeable like the city itself. The *Jet City Woman*, Naina, is the unattainable object of the protagonist's desire. Like Naina leaves him frustrated and dejected, similarly the small town girls and boys live on the edge of a precipice in this city. The almost racial divide, they experience within one's own country is exacerbated by the inherent schisms of a megacity like Delhi. Delhi, thus, is a significant character in the book that problematizes centrality by verbalizing the periphery. Sushmita Bose's *Single in The city* (2010) tells the tale of career women living on their own in Delhi facing multiple challenges of being small town working women in Delhi. ‘Single in the City’ works for The Hindustan Times. Hailing from Kolkata, she writes about the daily vagaries of adapting to the protean city. Delhi's Bengali haven, Chittranjan Park, is her choice of residence. Like Chang Town and PG accommodations in North campus, Delhi University forms a northeast cultural oasis, Chittaranjan Park is the same buffer for the Bengali settler. Though the book records the many pitfalls dogging the path of a single woman migrant professional, yet it also celebrates the emancipated autonomy available in the big city. Thus, the big city is an uncharted adventure offering escape, discovery, success, and identity.

Crime Fiction and Noir

Postmodern Delhi has also proved to be an apt setting for crime and detective fiction. British-origin writer Tarquin Hall, residing in New Delhi for the last few years and married to an Indian, has been writing his delightful Vish Puri series- *The Case of The Missing Servant* (2009, 2010), *The Case of the Man Who Died Laughing* (2012) and *The Case of The Deadly Butter Chicken* (2013). The series has Vish Puri sleuthing out of Khan Market. Hall forwards an interesting

theory regarding the popularity of Delhi as the chosen backdrop of Indian crime and detective fiction. Hall explains that, “I never planned to write detective fiction. My main interest was in writing about modern India and I decided that a private investigator would be a good way to describe it”. Zac O’Yeah, writing on detective fiction for Mint Lounge, also reiterates the social purpose of crime novels, which otherwise tend to be bracketed as pulp fiction:

Crime novels are like therapy; crime novels tell you something about how to survive in the big bad city with its everyday threats and traps. There are cultural aspects that make India different; a certain complexity in society, the family system in India is tighter, stronger. Detectives have to think more of their personal honor than a typical western private eye, who lives outside the system as a loner. An Indian detective is more connected to his or her clan and the larger social concerns of family life. Then, there is non-violence, a strong tradition, and a belief in karma: a detective cannot just shoot anybody just like that, or he or she might be reborn as a cockroach in his/her next life. (Sudan, December 8, 2014)

Thus, as Delhi potboiler simmers with the many contradictions and conflicts of India, crime fiction from its innards has begun to find global readability. As the genre becomes increasingly cosmopolitan, the city, stories strike a chord across milieus and nations. *Delhi Noir* (2009), an anthology of crime fiction edited by Hirsh Sawhney, manages to tread dark and seedy paths otherwise avoided in literature. In the process, it throws up an “alternative” facet of a city which seeks its rightful place in the overall picture. Writes the publishers’ blurb, “This is India uncut, the one you’re missing out on because mainstream publishing houses and glossy magazines can’t stomach it. It offers bone-chilling, mesmerizing take on the country’s chaotic capital, a city where opulence and poverty are constantly clashing, where old-world values and the information age wage a constant battle. Few books can alter one’s perception about the state of a society, but this does, while delivering noir that’s first-class in any light.” Thus, Delhi, on account of its whirlwind expansion, like Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Chicago, spreads out its own version of labyrinths of exist and nihilistic crises in film and fiction noir.

Memoirs and Travelogues

Postmodern Delhi figures extensively in memoirs of both natives and visitors. Malvika Singh documents Delhi right after the independence and its subsequent evolution in her *Perpetual City* (2013). At 12, her journalist parents, Raj and Romesh Thapar, relocated from Bombay to Delhi in the 1950s. They founded the literary journal *Seminar* in 1959. Singh, married Tejbir Singh, the nephew of Khushwant Singh. She paints a vivid picture of how life in the ’50s and ’60s was a lively gala of enjoying monuments, the Connaught Place, Old Delhi kuchas, musical soirees, and culinary fare. Talking about her need to write a memoir in a newspaper magazine article, she says there is no other way of writing the intimate ties with a city except through one’s empirical knowledge of it. In the second part of the memoir, titled ‘Changing City’, she recollects how political and bureaucratic corruption corrodes Delhi’s peace and charm. The reason she chooses the epithet “perpetual city” for postmodern Delhi is because she thinks that the city possesses a boundless zest and “keeps on adding value” despite all adversity. It “has grown into a very exciting city at all levels: culture, literature, journalism, art, fashion.” (Singh, December 6, 2013) Rana Dasgupta’s *Capital: A Portrait of Twenty-First century Delhi* (2014) on the other hand, digs at the brooding soul of the outwardly energetic city. While Malvika Singh’s memoir is a fond and indulgent recollection of the insider in the city, Rana Dasgupta swims against the tide as he negotiates his way into an insular city. Dasgupta arrives in Delhi from the United Kingdom in the year 2000 when the country is upbeat with anticipation of economic change. The economic boom, however, also brings in its wake conflict and violence.

The inexorable blows of savage capitalism, deal a fresh wound to the traumatised psyche of this ravaged city. There is a propaganda to see Delhi as an “emerging” city with equitable and consistent growth patterns, but the Dasgupta’s book draws attention to the morbid din and divide within this growth saga. Dasgupta, therefore, sees postmodern Delhi’s dreams quicken and evaporate at the same time.

While Rana Dasgupta links the ferocity of partition with dystopia in the city, Raza Rumi returns to India from Pakistan to alleviate that dystopia which he thinks in most South Asian cities. Most South Asian cities have witnessed violence and have been victims of narrow nationalist ideologies. In Raza Rumi’s *Delhi by Heart*, travel is not simply geographical but a travel across a schizophrenic divide of belonging and betrayal. As he meets Indians in ideologically neutral institutions of higher studies, UN missions, and Asian Development Bank, he undergoes a healing process of “unlearning” India. He is convinced that tolerant approaches like Sufism can provide emotional and psychological panacea in troubled South Asian cities. He rids himself of the indoctrination of treating India as the ‘enemy other’. He loves the Indian capital because it has been home to admirable personalities, Sufi philosophy, Urdu language and syncretic culture. Thus, Rumi’s *Delhi By Heart*, finds immense therapeutic and allaying potential in the cultural heritage of Delhi- a heritage which is precious and cannot be surrendered to fundamentalist agenda.

Expatriate Writing

Dalrymple’s *City of Djinnns* is the most celebrated novel in the category of expatriate writing. It engages with the city of Delhi at the level of managing ‘otherness’, speaking to the trans-national populace dwelling in foreign cities, coming to terms with processes of settling down, accumulating eclectic cultural experience, immersing in the experience of finding the city and documenting its stories and histories. Dalrymple notes that the world of nationalism, socialism and non-alignment in the post-independence Delhi stands replaced by capitalism, liberalization and globalization in postmodern Delhi. Standing at the cusp of modernity and postmodernity, he is riddled with some irreconcilable contradictions- first, the general meek and mild Delhiwalla is capable of gruesome acts of apathy and brutality. The city regarded as the most cultured city also has the history of rising bigoted mob violence. He grapples with another conundrum with respect to the arrival and departure of the British from India. Dalrymple takes to “ameliorating the British presence in India, and does so by constructing a particular (neo-benign) representation of the Raj” (Dorgelo, n.d.) and by glossing over their Econo-political and hegemonic domination in India. Cracking these riddles, finding telling narratives and excavating clues hidden in the depth of Delhi history constitute Dalrymple’s quest in the city of djinnns making him a cultural tourist, historian, expatriate and ex-imperialist all at the same time. Thus, the dawn of postmodern Delhi scripts a unique struggle in *City of Djinnns* with demons of the city and the demons of the self.

Sam Miller is a link in the expatriate chain traversing and writing Delhi with the osmotic fluidity of the outsider across city, self and ‘other’. He peregrinates in Delhi on foot like a true blue flâneur. A graduate in History from Cambridge and post-graduate in Politics from School of Oriental and African Studies, he first worked as a journalist in Delhi in 1990s. Writing *Delhi: Adventures in a Megacity* in 2008, Miller says he feels “vacillating attraction and repulsion for this monstrous, addictive city”. (Miller, 2008, p.4) Roaming the city like “a man possessed” (Miller, 2008, p. 4), he decides to walk in the city because ambulation is the exclusive prerogative of the homo sapiens. Delhi streets are a nightmare, all the more for a ‘foreigner’, but a huge chunk of the business of life is transacted in Delhi in the streets. The

kaleidoscopic experience available at pedestrian level is indispensable for any connoisseur of the city. Says Miller in a newspaper interview to Shailaja Bajpayi:

I have gone to insalubrious places and wondered what stories I would get out of them. My expectations were challenged. When we go there, we should not think the poorest of the poor are hopeless. Often they have more interesting things to tell.

Following the drift of contemporary expatriate writing, this flâneur feels the crackling hybridity stoked by the winds of capitalism and globalization. Explains Miller

... I walk the streets in a route which I describe in the book, trying to explore what has happened to this extraordinary city and the most important thing is that, in many ways, it had become a world city. (Miller, January 28, 2009)

Miller, thus, does not engage as much with Delhi's past as Dalrymple does. He charts the route of its present and future. Miller emerges to be the quintessential flâneur as he puts his otherness out there to such an extent that he defeats the "bahurupiya shahr" (multi-faceted city) in its own game by showing the city its own 'other' face. The objective of the Miller's peripatetic journey is to overcome "otherness" that an expatriate feels in a new city, but with the adventurism of the flâneur and the immersion of a journalist, he shows a mirror to the city of Delhi that reflects not its storied splendor but the "other" face of urban squalor.

CONCLUSIONS

The above inquiry suggests that postmodern Delhi's journey commencing with economic liberalization of the 1980s and standing today in a flurry of global flux has bewildered and churned the Indian as well as the expatriate jet-setter in equal measures. The act of reading and writing postmodern Delhi is inextricably linked to the sense of "otherness" arising out of inbuilt hierarchies and binaries of societies. To deal with this "otherness", postmodern Delhi has been writing itself voluminously. As is evident from the Delhi novel boom at the turn of the century, the oeuvre has been swelling not only numerically, but also the tropes, locations, voices, genres inscribed in it have also multiplied. These novels document the unique urbanity palpable in Delhi as interacted through the writers' shifting subjectivity and psycho-geographic spatiality. More than the writer's location, it is their dislocation that becomes an active participant in the thematics and form of the postmodern Delhi novel. Denizens of postmodern Delhi cannot remain impervious to the very disparate and diverse; competitive and congested; visual, aural and the verbally overloaded environment they run into at every twist and turn in the city. Campus goers, new migrants, Old Delhiwallah gentry, expats, diplomats, colonywallahs, housing society dwellers, "centrally located", peri-urban ultra-luxury havens- all seek to vanquish the hydra-headed monster of the maximum city. The narratives take the mold of the city itself – winding, groping, finding hiding, and ultimately inconclusive. Thus, in the postmodern Delhi novel, the empirical and the prosthetic memory converges in odysseys that straddle urban fissures of proximity vs. remoteness, belongingness vs. loneliness, community living vs. blasé anonymity, affluence vs. poverty, centre vs. periphery, civicism vs. alienation, opportunity vs. monopoly and many such structural and existential dichotomies splintered all over the urban landscape.

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