

CHAPTER-4

The Everyday as Explorer: The Production of Local Knowledge in the Quotidian Space

In the previous chapters I examined the problematics of the idea of the nation, the necessity of retrieving lost narratives and erased histories, and the peripheral people's act of producing counter-narratives to the hegemonic suppression of the centre and to all forms of authoritative system. However, apart from analyzing these issues in relation to the production of alternative narratives of the local and the peripheral in the novels of Chaudhuri, Roy, Deb and Dai, in this chapter I want to focus on the role of the everyday in writing local histories. I want to show that the everyday plays a crucial role in projecting the immediate realities of the present and local knowledges. I think that the discussion of the alternative histories of the local and the marginal would be incomplete, if the role of everyday life in projecting local realities is not taken into account. Moreover, when there is a discussion of peripheral histories, the everyday must be foregrounded as a site of revelation and critique. The everyday is put in the margins of the institutional activities of man, the way local histories are sidelined by the official narratives of nationally significant issues and subjectivities. This chapter tries to highlight the socio-political realities which affect the ordinary lives in the local space. The basic premise of this chapter is that in the heart of the everyday lies embedded the larger socio-political realities which shape ordinary lives and the entire social unconscious. The chapter draws on Harry Harootunian's comment that "everydayness is a form of disquiet" (21). This proposition signifies that the everyday may serve as a site of both critique and transformative possibilities; it is a site of socio-political exploration and it also at times suggests the potential for creating alternative spaces within itself. The writers under discussion – Amit Chaudhuri, Arundhati Roy, Siddhartha Deb and Mamang Dai – represent the everyday as a socio-political signifier in their novels. Their way of treating the everyday differs from each other. Yet there is a common element in their engagement with the everyday: all of them depart from the traditional notion that the everyday is an insignificant site compared to the official mode of human behaviours and activities. It is evident from the fictional narratives of these writers that they

acknowledge the everyday as a significant constituent in the articulation of local history. The everyday grapples with the immediate realities of the present and it is impossible to understand local realities or to produce local histories without focusing on the critical side of the everyday. Bishnupriya Ghosh rightly observes that for many contemporary writers the everyday has become a chosen subject, a significant constituent of their discursive formation. Ghosh has particularly referred to Arundhati Roy as a novelist who deliberately privileges the everyday in *The God of Small Things*. Ghosh considers such narrative focus as a useful medium of critiquing globalism (65). It is not only Roy who takes resort to the everyday as mode of critiquing globalism or capitalism, Chaudhuri, Deb and Dai also have detected the reification of ordinary lives through their observation of the everyday.

This chapter draws on Ben Highmore's assessment of the everyday with reference to its diverse theoretical interpretations, to emphasize on the fact that the everyday does not signify the dull, familiar and the banal sides of life. It highlights the varied interpretations of the everyday – the theoretical propositions made by Walter Benjamin, Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre. These interpretations help to understand how this usually ignored site of knowledge production can be a useful site of exploration and critique. The representation of the everyday in the fictional narratives of Chaudhuri, Roy, Deb and Dai resonates with the theoretical propositions made by the above mentioned critics. The common ground of their narrativizing the everyday is that it serves as a powerful site of organizing the experience of the immediate present: the everyday in their novels serves as a medium of conceptualizing the transforming socio-political realities of the local space. Highmore discusses various socio-political and cultural significations of everyday life. Although the everyday or everyday life generally refers to the routinized or day-to-day activities, Highmore comments that its signification always bears ambivalence. He points out two aspects of everyday life: "Here the everydayness of everyday life might be experienced as sanctuary, or it may bewilder or give pleasure, it may delight or depress. Or its special quality may be its lack of qualities. It might be, precisely, the unnoticed, the inconspicuous, the unobtrusive" (1). Although the everyday signifies the most familiar and the most recognizable, there is always a possibility that the unfamiliar may disturb and disrupt the familiar and the recognizable. Highmore calls it the "shock of the new" which may send tremors to the core of the

everyday (2). The everyday is not a static space, it becomes a setting for a dynamic process, “for making the unfamiliar familiar; for getting accustomed to the disruption of customs; for struggling to incorporate the new; for adjusting to different ways of living” (2). Highmore says that the everyday has the ability to witness the emergence of the new, the strange and the revolutionary into the space of the familiar and the quotidian. He alludes to the character of Sherlock Holmes to interpret the strangeness of the everyday. For this famous fictional character created by Arthur Conan Doyle, the world of the everyday signifies the dull, the banal and the humdrum. But Highmore comments that the everyday is the site of the bizarre, the strange and the mysterious, not merely of dull everydayness: “The non-everyday (the exceptional) is there to be found in the heart of the everyday” (3). In fact Sherlock Holmes, who takes the route of the everyday to solve mysteries, becomes a symbol of demystification of the bizarre and the mysterious. His act of solving mysteries serves as a symbol of the return to the everyday. Drawing on Highmore’s interpretation of Sherlock Holmes as an agent of probing into the heart of the everyday, I want to state that even for a man like Holmes, who finds pleasure in the bizarre and mysterious, the everyday turns out to be the ultimate destination of his search.

As this chapter focuses on the everyday as a site where social structures lie embedded, it is important to see how classic literary narratives have represented it as a powerful social analyser. In the world of institutionalized works the quotidian practices are often associated with the banality of everydayness. But this banality, emerging out of repetitive day-to-day practices and the boredom associated with it, can be a social signifier too. Highmore says that the everyday temporality, which creates monotony and boredom, can be treated as a powerful medium of diagnosing social class. He alludes to the classic example of boredom of the aristocratic life as represented in the character of Emma Bovary in Flaubert’s classic novel *Madame Bovary*. The life of Emma Bovary exhibits an aristocratic everyday life, where luxury and excess are part of a daily routine and where there is an absolute absence of differentiation which would erase the deadening quality of the everyday (10). So in one level the everydayness of the everyday, whether it is focused on the domestic site or the public sphere – the street, for instance, serves as a medium of social diagnosis and on another level it witnesses the mysterious and the strange within the apparently familiar. Chaudhuri, Roy, Deb and Dai explore the

everyday – both in the home and in the street, from the domestic space to the public domain. They rescue the everyday from being erased and suppressed by the privileged, institutional modes of social functions. They recognize the potential of the everyday as a medium of generating counter-discourse to the official discourses where the everyday is put under erasure. The everyday in their novels has become a space for creating local knowledge, for diagnosing the hegemonic politics of the existing social structures in the domestic and the public sphere. The everyday does not remain a taken-for-granted reality in the fictional narratives of Chaudhuri, Roy, Deb and Dai. They take into account both the mundane and the strange aspects of the everyday. Like the character of Sherlock Holmes, the characters and the situations represented in the novels of these four writers demystify the mysterious and return to the everyday. Simultaneously they represent the familiar everyday as disrupted by the emergence of the new and the revolutionary, as mentioned by Highmore. The everyday which is often submerged in the official narrative of man's history gets foregrounded in Chaudhuri, Roy, Deb and Dai's novels. They represent the everyday in its complex as well as in its familiar mode. As the character of Emma Bovary in Flaubert's novel, trapped in everydayness and boredom, represents the psychology of a woman in the backdrop of existing social structures, the characters and situations in the novels of these four writers reflect hidden socio-political structures which lie embedded in the everyday.

To analyse Amit Chaudhuri's novels in the light of the everyday, it is necessary to see Walter Benjamin's views on the concept. Benjamin's notion of the everyday particularly engages with the usually discarded materials of the everyday scene, and has much similarity with Amit Chaudhuri's representation of quotidian life in his novels. Chaudhuri has written many articles on the significance of the domestic and the quotidian space which show the direct influence of Benjamin. In *The Arcades Project* Benjamin presents the nineteenth century Paris for tracing the everyday, and deals with the problematic of finding out an accurate mode of articulating modern everyday life. Benjamin considers the traditional narrative forms as inaccurate for representing the everyday. He, on the contrary, introduces the concept of the *flâneur* – a word adapted by him from the work of the French poet and critic Charles Baudelaire. Benjamin has used this word to theorize a society based on consumerism, where the practices of consumption are the most visible ones. The *flâneur* belongs to the margin of both the

urban world and the bourgeoisie. He engages in aimless walks and witnesses the images of urban life and bourgeois culture as spectacles. The word *flâneur* can be translated as “stroller” or “loiterer” – an emblem of modernity. Charles Baudelaire used the term *flâneur* in “The Painter of Modern life” to define a consumer of the modern urban life or the city. Benjamin has borrowed this concept from Baudelaire to project the *flâneur* as both observer and consumer, who walks through the streets of the city to catch its shifting images. Benjamin’s approach to the everyday resembles the works of a ragpicker, because Benjamin’s *flâneur* walks through the city to find out the trash materials of the everyday. Highmore comments that Benjamin’s approach to everyday history is “through ‘trash’ – through the spent and discarded materials that crowd the everyday” (61). Harootunian also discusses the everyday in relation to Benjamin’s *flâneur* and projects the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa as an observer of the everyday. Pessoa perceived two aspect of the everyday: its dull, banal side and its capacity to inspire serious reflections. Harootunian says: “Acutely attuned to everyday modernity in Lisbon in the 1920s, the modernist poet Pessoa marked the distance between the dull, routine monotony of everyday life, filled with minutiae, and the lofty reflections that everydayness inspired, between the past and the now of the present” (1). Pessoa marked that the monotony and the banality of the everyday offered space for observing and reflecting on the layered realities of man’s life. He critically observed the urban space in the background of industrialization and modern capitalism. Pessoa played the role of a spectator of a street with its fragmented everyday scenes. This banality of the everyday offered him a world full of strangeness and mystery. Like Benjamin’s *flâneur*, who watched the life on the streets of Paris, Pessoa also emerged as a spectator of everyday life in the city of Lisbon. Harootunian has referred to Pessoa’s poetic talent and philosophical reflections to state that the everyday is located in the periphery of the industrialized world, yet gets affected by the transforming processes of the society under capitalism. Amit Chaudhuri as a critic and as a writer of fiction has been much influenced by Benjamin’s projection of *flâneur*. In an essay titled “Kalighat Revisited” Chaudhuri presents the everyday as a reflection of the contemporary collective consciousness. Chaudhuri projects Kalighat paintings as being embedded, both artificially and psychologically, in the history and popular culture of the time. The Kalighat paintings, in his opinion, serve as the representation of the birth of the urban modernity in the nineteenth century Calcutta. The images and motifs of these paintings

are borrowed from the urban life of that time. In the essay Chaudhuri particularly mentions a painting where Shiva and Parvati, along with Kartik take Ganesh out on a family outing, “looking rather like a lower-middle-class family in Marxist Bengal” (279). This painting displays the cosmopolitan world of the colonial Calcutta, as it shows Kartik as wearing fashionable, Westernized buckled shoes. These mythical figures become a part of the urban everyday life, to reveal truths about the socio-economic parameter of that time when the painting was done. Chaudhuri feels that even the festival of Durga Puja has been transformed by the Bengali craftsmen and artisans from a harvest festival into a dimension of creative exploration. He comments that such transformations serve as an outrageous comment on urban reality, as apart from working as cultural signifier they work simultaneously as social comment and parody (279). In this process the sacred is transformed into the political. In the same essay Chaudhuri refers to Benjamin’s essay “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” where he notes how the amorphous crowd of passers-by and the people in the street always figure in Baudelaire’s creativity as a hidden figure, and serve as a significant element of the nineteenth century European modernity in the backdrop of capitalism. Chaudhuri quotes Benjamin to point out that in this amorphous crowd there is the *flâneur*, “a typical figure in the urban landscape, the loiterer – often gentleman of leisure or citified dandy – who plunges into the crowd for no particular reason, except to window-shop, observe, and survey the various ephemeral items of urban paraphernalia, displayed on pavements and in windows” (280). Chaudhuri says that the crowd which serves as the hidden figure in Baudelaire’s representation of Paris serves the same creative and political purpose in Kalighat paintings. He defines the crowd and the *flâneur* as the significant elements of the construction of the nineteenth century modernity in Calcutta. Chaudhuri observes that in the context of the modern bourgeois India, the *flâneur* operates in the domestic space, as projected by the painting of Shiva, Parvati, Ganesh and Kartik – where the entire divine family becomes the representative of the urban *flâneur*. They emerge as loiterer and customer, enacting the constituents of a capitalistic urban life. In Chaudhuri’s own novels, where he valorizes local culture and subjectivities, the characters are found to be projected in the backdrop of a banal and quotidian reality. The banal and the quotidian become the medium of producing the local knowledge – the characters often emerge as loiterers and observers to comment on the larger realities of the public sphere being hidden in the domestic and the quotidian. Chaudhuri’s novels represent how the domestic and the quotidian are

associated with the public domain. The everyday in Chaudhuri's novels becomes the register of hidden socio-political realities. The everyday practices which are often ignored and are treated as insignificant, play a significant role in Chaudhuri's novels. His characters emerge as urban *flâneur*, to project the hidden public realities of the capitalist society. In his writings Chaudhuri repeatedly focuses on the potentialities of the *flâneur*. In "Arun Kolatkar and the Tradition of Loitering", for instance, Chaudhuri identifies the presence of the *flâneur* in the poetic talent of Kolatkar. He particularly discerns this aspect in Kolatkar's famous collection of poems *Jejuri*, published in 1976. Chaudhuri relates Kolatkar's fondness for visiting Bombay Wayside Inn, from the window of which he could observe the "low-life, the obscure daily-wage-earners, and itinerant families" (222), to Benjamin's theory of the *flâneur*. Benjamin's definition of the *flâneur* as an analogue for receptivity and creativity is applicable to Kolatkar's works. For Kolatkar the modern metropolis with its everydayness becomes a medium of observing and exploring the familiar to find deeper realities. In the observation of the *flâneur* the binaries of the interior and the exterior or the private and the public become blurred and it becomes possible to search the mysterious, the strange and the marvellous in the everyday. Kolatkar, while looking out from the window of the Wayside Inn found the interior being mingled with the exterior. For Chaudhuri it is the "indeterminate space, where the street turns into an interior, and which complicates the urban boundary separating room from pavement, that's so crucial to the *flâneur's* experience of reality" (231). The unremarkable objects and the banal are the subject of the *flâneur's* observation, and the *flâneur* finds excitement and strangeness in the usually unnoticed everyday life.

In his novels Chaudhuri's characters emerge as the urban *flâneur*, indulging themselves in aimless walks, revealing epiphanic realities being hidden in the everyday. The *flâneur* at the same time becomes an observer of the shifts in the public domain, as the everyday reveals the socio-political changes through the quotidian details. Chaudhuri's *A Strange and Sublime Address* presents the character of Sandeep as the *flâneur*, who walks aimlessly at times, to observe and to record the urban life of the city of Calcutta. Calcutta gets projected through the eyes of Sandeep as well as through the detached description of everyday life in the novel's narrative:

Calcutta is a city of dust . . . the roads are always being dug up, partly to construct the new underground railway system, or perhaps for some other obscure reason....Calcutta is like a work of modern art that neither makes sense nor has utility, but exists for some esoteric reason....Daily, Calcutta disintegrates, unwhispering, into dust, and daily it rises from dust again. (14)

Here Calcutta emerges as a site of repeated, routinized activities, which does not offer any magic or strangeness. The newly industrialized face of Calcutta even transforms the public domain, which is supposed to be a space of constant renewal or changes, into a site which loses all possibility of strangeness. West Bengal in the 1980s saw an industrial stagnation as a result of the centre's negligence. However, the adoption of the new economic policies in 1991 by the Narasimha Rao led Congress Government in the centre opened up new vistas of economic development in the entire country. The Jyoti Basu Government in West Bengal announced the industrial policy in 1994 which emphasized the use of new technology and economic development. In the backdrop of this shifting economic scenario, the city of Calcutta changed too. Chaudhuri's novels, which present the newly industrialized city of Calcutta, emphasize the problematic of these transformations through the representation of the everyday. *A Strange and Sublime Address* is not about an industrially advanced Calcutta; it is more about an old Calcutta. Yet the past and the present of the city emerge intertwined in the everyday details:

They went past the bridge in Dhakuria, past Gol Park, where a statue of Swami Vivekananda, with arms folded in fierce serenity, stood staring unflinchingly at an advertisement for biscuits; past Goriahat market; past Rashbari Avenue, which would be lit with rows and rows of shops on a weekday, and which was distinguished by having the largest number of underwear shops in the world; then into Chowringhee with its colonial buildings, vacant and proud, looking on Sunday evening like a black and white photograph of another era. (18)

The everyday details here conceptualize and organize the local realities of the city of Calcutta in the backdrop of the transforming present.

The everyday in Chaudhuri's *A Strange and Sublime Address* presents a parallel existence which subverts the state-imposed, industrial reality of the city: the narrative talks about pigeons and their natural cycles of routined activities. The *flâneur*-like observer in Sandeep witnesses the non-official, non-systematized practices of the birds:

The boys, in a rare, unenergetic moment, were sprawled by the window, looking at pigeons. The pigeons, red eyes and rainbows around their violet-black necks, were moving about on the parapet studiously. Copulation and some scatological considerations were all that preoccupied them. The furthest extent of their aesthetic contribution to life was the intricate manner in which they arranged their excrement on the parapet, so that it came to resemble a mosaic or an abstract graphic on stone. (42)

Although the urban life of the city is the prime focus of Chaudhuri's representation of the everyday, the existence of an alternative space is equally emphasized in his novels. In *Freedom Song* the routined and quotidian side of life is shown to be enacted by birds and animals: "Morning came to the house through the windows at the back of the second storey, via a school in a field and a doctor's house; when a shutter was opened, the light found its way straight to one's eye. By this time mynah, shaliks, sparrows, crows, had begun to echo on parapets and window-sills, and a cat had waken up and fallen asleep again" (248, 249). The urban, industrialized everyday is constantly interrupted by the natural everyday. The way the interior and the exterior or the private and the public encroach into each other, the industrialized and the natural also encroach into each other's space in Chaudhuri's portrayal of the everyday. The habitual and repeated performances of the birds in Chaudhuri's novels reflect this aspect: "Thus near Mini's house, near the sweet shop with its heavy smell and the decrepit land-lord's houses, birds rose almost peacefully into the air. Thus they would rise habitually from the most ancient part of Calcutta, shriek, and then return a few moments later to balconies and cornices" (393). Chaudhuri's *Freedom Song* beautifully presents the newly industrialized Calcutta and the gradual emergence of a consumer culture through the juxtaposition of the interior and the exterior, the natural and the systematized:

Then, when the train had gone, the air was cleansed, and the room was as quiet as the reflection in the dressing table mirror, with Oil of Ulay, Lactocalamine, Vaseline, Pond's Dream Flower Talc, and the lipsticks arranged carefully, with all devotion and seriousness, on the shelf before it. Very slowly, like town officials who had respectfully ceased their transactions for a minute, the crows and sparrows began again, but sounding more distant now, even chastised, perhaps in comparison to the grand interlude of the train whistle. (272)

The everyday in Chaudhuri's novels appears in a reified form, with the gradual interruption of a consumer culture and industrialization. The private space is colonized by the capitalist culture, with the emergence of foreign products in the domestic space. The ordinary man becomes a part of the entire process of reification: "Here South Calcutta receded; homes, children, mothers, servants, were replaced by men in dirty overalls wandering about in the workshed. Without explanation, the machines hummed and rattled. In other factories nearby, machines hummed and rattled as well for the purposes of a tiny but persistent line of production" (373).

In the narrative of the everyday of the street is always a significant space. In Chaudhuri's *Freedom Song* the street becomes a site of everyday performances where the realities of the public domain come to the surface. In this novel the street also becomes a site of possibility and transformation. A character of the novel – Bhaskar, who worked for *Ganashakti*, a Communist journal – becomes an active performer of street plays: "They lived the freedom and heat of performing on the streets, of being uncircumscribed by the proscenium, the proximity and palpability of the houses that bordered their performance, their gestures spilling over onto the pulse of the ragged audience, the nearness of the streetsky" (312). Here the street becomes a space of the everyday where the interior and the exterior lose their boundaries and it serves as a signal of social transformation. *Freedom Song* portrays the crucial time which saw the emergence of a new global world order and a capitalistic ideology. The quotidian details of the novel reflect both the colonizing of the ordinary lives by capitalism and the possibility of finding out an alternative way of life.

In *Small Orange Flags: On Living During a 'State of Emergency'* Chaudhuri speaks about the consciousness that is inflected, threatened and endangered by the political, the consciousness that registers and is permeated by the political (43). He points out that the small symptoms in consciousness may signal the emergence of changes. An entire life-world has been witnessed by him as a portrayal of transformations brought about by globalization and capitalism in the upper middle class life: the common people's preference for the English medium public school, Archie comics, rock music, etc. Chaudhuri talks about an experience of sudden rupture happening around us, as a consequence of the changes brought about by post-economic liberalization. He says that the political is approached through the personal: "Big, sweeping changes take place 'out there' and are filtered through on to this one life that consequently lives differently or eats differently or dies differently" (46). In *A New World* Chaudhuri projects the new Calcutta after the post-economic liberalization, as perceived through the everyday, by Jayojit – who himself is an economist. Everyday life appears in all his fictions as a significant constituent in the narrative. However, in *A New World* the everyday appears in a different form as it appears here without the magic of childhood. The novel's title suggests a new world order brought about by the globalized market. Jayojit and his son Bonny come from America to Calcutta, carrying Apple laptop and a bottle of Chivas Regal. The everyday life of the Chatterjee family in Calcutta, and that of Jayojit and Bonny stand in the opposite poles. The old world order of the Chatterjee family is gradually colonized by the commodities brought from the globalized world. After arriving his home in Calcutta, Jayojit brings out some objects of daily use from his bag. The description of these objects reflects his closeness to a consumer culture:

Next he unzipped the shoulder bag and retrieved his shaving things and his and Vikram's toilet accessories, Aquafresh tooth-paste, Head and Shoulder shampoo, Bodyline deodorant, a cylinder of old spice shaving foam, a Backwood insect cutter which he'd brought in case of mosquitoes; these things gleamed the most and looked the most foreign and desirable; even the toothbrushes were different and, curving oddly, seemed to belong to the future and some fragile, opulent culture. (17,18)

This fragile, opulent culture is the new global culture, which brings lot of paradoxical values in the life of the middle class people as Jayojit has observed. Jayojit as a *flâneur* walks around the city, and finds the private and the public space equally being affected by the new world order. Whereas in *A Strange and Sublime Address* and in *Freedom Song* an alternative everyday has been represented through the natural everyday of the birds, through the search for the magic in the ordinary, in *A New World* the everyday presents a dark reality, a world without magic and mystery. On the other hand, *The Immortals* presents another face of the everyday – the everyday here becomes the site of an alternative space for Nirmalya, the *flâneur*. The city of Bombay reveals its different faces in front of Nirmalya. The balcony from which Nirmalya sees the outside world, gives him the glimpse of the city and its alternative space: “From the balcony in front, you could see the sea, Chawpatty beach, the Marine Drive stretching and curving to the right: all that mattered in Bombay was before you; you did not need to know any more of the city – you took that fickle, flickering, glittering view to be the city itself” (46). The balcony offers Nirmalya a sense of repetitiveness of the everyday in the city of Bombay. Simultaneously he feels that the sea viewed from the balcony was “a negation of the city’s human energies” (66). Nirmalya’s perception of the city’s everyday life contains two different realities: the city’s banal picture and its constantly changing, ephemeral aspect reflected in the sea. For Nirmalya the balcony serves as a dynamic space which gives him the glimpse of the city’s everyday life and the strangeness of the sea, and the flat stands as a static, unenergetic space: “From the balcony, he saw the sea approaching with awe and a feeling of doom. But the balcony had become the front rows of a movie theatre, and the flat itself was like the inside of a cinema; a cinema that is elegant and in business, but strangely empty” (67). Like Arun Kolatkar who observed the streets of Bombay from a window of the Wayside Inn as the *flâneur*, Nirmalya also witnesses the outside world, where the interior and the exterior encroach into each other. The fleeting banality of the outside world offers him a sense of strangeness and the sea stands in front of him as a symbol of the other world, an alternative everyday in the world of consumerism, represented by the corporate life of his father. The strangeness of the everyday comes to Nirmalya through the view from the balcony: “He went to the balcony, considered the view; much-praised, much-prized – more valuable than any of the artifacts inside” (193). The booming city and the corporate world sparkling with money do not attract Nirmalya – the quickly changing city of Bombay with its false

promise of fulfilment fails to offer him comfort. He rather turns to an alternative everyday offered by the balcony of his house. Like the majority of the characters in Chaudhuri's novels Nirmalya too walks aimlessly in the city. As a *flâneur* he finds strangeness in the ordinary and witnesses larger socio-political realities embedded in the small symptoms of the everyday: "Once again, he'd gone out for a walk; he loved the conjunction of foreignness and familiarity in Bandra; he was impelled constantly by a sense of discovery but also of wonder and recognition" (295). The city's reification, the changes appearing due to industrialization are observed by Nirmalya in his aimless walks through different corners of Bombay:

Nirmalya sneaked out for a walk around Thacker Towers. This part of Cuffe Parade had been ocean not very long ago; it was land that had been fairly recently reclaimed. Upon it had appeared Thacker Towers and its sister skyscrapers: a whole family of tall siblings that didn't seem to know one another....Walking, he was aware of its newness, as if it were the edge of a young planet. (89)

In his latest novel *Odysseus Abroad* Chaudhuri presents the two major characters – Ananda and Rangamama – as walking in the streets of London, taking account of the surrounding, including the consumer-culture of the city, and discussing literature. Ananda observes that the streets of London are full of Indians; the Indians in London do business even on Sundays. These Indians have become part of London's commerce: "Sundays were a graveyard but for the Alis, Patels, Shahs, who (with Thatcher's collusion) were always open for business" (104). Chaudhuri in this novel has represented ordinary everyday sights as revealing the dominant ideology, which he emphasized on his observation of the Kalighat paintings. The dominant British ideology of considering the West as superior to the Orient emerges obliquely in a portrait of Christ hung up in a restaurant wall – an Indian restaurant in London. Ananda feels that the portrait transforms Christ into an ordinary figure: "the generic Christ, the timorous, blonde-haired, blue-eyed face upturned to the heavens, a lost middle-class student searching for guideline in an inhospitable world" (238). Ananda feels that Christ, who was not a European and was from the Middle-East, has been portrayed through a Western way of representation, with a prominent nose: "The way you see him today is Western

propaganda” (238). In the background of the everyday scene in a restaurant of London, Christ’s Westernized representation in the portrait shows how the ideology of a dominant culture may operate in an extremely subtle way. The Western politics of appropriation emerges here in a usually unnoticed site: the restaurant wall and the picture of Christ hung up on it, are constituents of the everyday, but a closer examination reveals the hidden political connotations lying beneath such constituents. Ananda observes that even in James Bond movies the everyday indulgences of the Western protagonist stand for West’s dominant ideology and its construction of the myth of West’s superiority. Bond is often seen as being indulged in shaving – an everyday performance which bears lot of significances in the context of the Bond movie. In the Bond movie shaving becomes “an exhibition of his pheromonic powers”, which is always seen as being cut short by some interruptions-sometimes a deadly insect or sometimes by a spy (128). Ananda observes that “this one recorded act of his humble daily toilette was made tantalizing by being never completed” (128). This everyday ritual in the Bond movie stands as a medium to exhibit how for Bond the act of saving the world is a priority over everything else. The projection of the everyday performance of shaving and the representation of it always being incomplete for some serious action in the Bond movie, as Ananda observes, serve as a trope for constructing the myth of Western superiority.

Chaudhuri’s novels usually present the insignificant details of daily life, which are traditionally considered as the banal aspects of human life. Instead of seeing the boredom of the highly predicable everyday, Chaudhuri has treated the everyday from a different angle. For him the everyday becomes a site of revelation, a space for knowledge production. The localized world of Chaudhuri’s fiction projects larger socio-political realities through the representation of the everyday: the everyday in Chaudhuri’s narrative is the trajectory through the conceptualization of which the experiences of the present can be synthesized. Here I want to quote Saikat Majumdar who defines Chaudhuri’s representation of everyday and quotidian life as a “deconstructive historiography of the quotidian” (453). Majumdar gives an example of quotidian history from *A Strange and Sublime Address*; he quotes a scene from the novel where Sandeep’s uncle takes him and his cousins for a walk during the regular power-cuts in the evening. Sandeep thinks that there may be many interesting stories in the houses he sees during the walks. Majumdar refers to this scene as an instance of Chaudhuri’s interest in the

fragments of everyday life. He says: “Unlike many introspective writers who delve deeper into the human psyche, for Chaudhuri, the deepest wonders of life seem to lie on its very surface, on the quotidian materiality of its daily texture” (454). Majumdar identifies Chaudhuri’s preference for the quotidian as a deconstructive mode of historiography – a historiography that rejects the narratives of the public domain. He defines the scene in *A Strange and Sublime Address* where Sandeep’s uncle champions Subhash Bose over Gandhi and Nehru, as an illustration of “the independent relationship between everyday life and the production of locality” (Majumdar 452). For Majumdar the everyday is embedded in the act of producing local cultures, knowledges and subjectivities.

Like Benjamin’s concept of the *flâneur* Michel de Certeau’s perception of the everyday also focuses on the experience of walkers. Certeau defines the everyday as something hidden and elusive. He says: “The ordinary practitioners of the city live ‘down below’, below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk – an elementary form of this experience in the city; they are walkers . . . whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an ‘urban text’ they write without being able to read it” (93). Certeau’s opinion on the nature of the everyday is that words and images never become adequate to capture it. On the other hand, Michael E. Gardiner views the everyday as a site of possibility, because it is a space beyond the grip of the institutional modes of work. He comments: “Everyday life evinces an irreducibly imaginative and symbolic dimension, and it cannot simply be written off as the realm of the trivial and inconsequential. It is the very ‘messiness’ of daily life, its unsystematized and unpredictable quality, that helps it escape the reifying grip of nomothetic social science and technocratic planning” (16). This definition is applicable to Benjamin’s definition of the *flâneur* and Certeau’s definition of the everyday in terms of an experience of walking, where the daily urban life reveals itself through the quotidian realities. Moreover, it states that the everyday has the potential to resist the systematic incursion of capitalism. In Chaudhuri’s representation of the everyday also there is a signification that the everyday cannot be fully colonized by the official or capitalist forces, and its resistant forces lie hidden within it.

Benjamin defines the everyday as largely projected through the observation of the walker or the loiterer, which is seen in Chaudhuri's representation of everyday life in his novels. On the other hand, there are some writers who see the fragmented side of the everyday world, the way the impressionist painters attend to the trivial objects in their paintings. For such writers the everyday is an accumulation of fleeting moments. Such montage-like and impressionistic treatment of everyday life can be found in Siddhartha Deb's novel *The Point of Return*. The narrator in this novel mostly indulges in recording the fleeting images of the everyday. He even feels that if a particular moment of the everyday is emphasized, "put too much weight", it can be turned into epiphany (233). Dr. Dam – the veterinary doctor – goes to examine animals and in the street he records the fragmentary scenes of the everyday:

The town was not a pretty sight, he thought, with its strange mix of decay and development: the crush of bicycles and rickshaws and small vans on its flat, narrow roads, the shabbily dressed office workers loitering at the market place during their lunch break, the thick layer of dust that lay on the signboards of shops, the overflowing garbage bin with thin, diseased cows rummaging through rotten fruit and vegetables. (106,107)

The dark side of the urban life comes to be projected through the everyday details here. There is a chapter titled "Learning to Walk" in the novel where the narrator, Babu emerges as someone learning to see the distinction between what is real and what is apparently attractive. He constantly feels that the familiar sights are unattractive and it becomes necessary to think about "alternative possibilities" (199). The familiar, the narrator feels, is "too slow to quench the hunger we had for the world" (217). Like the character of Sherlock Holmes in Conan Doyle's fiction, Babu also feels that the familiar in the everyday stands for the dull and the unattractive. However, as Holmes finds the strange and the mysterious in the heart of the everyday, Babu also realizes that an alternative space of possibilities lies within the apparently unappealing everyday. Babu remembers the lama who goes to a mountain peak and blesses everything below. He wants to leave the familiar everyday of the hill-town in search of strangeness and mystery like the lama, going to a peak and "seeing the town spread out below like a map

and speaking to every inch of it” (199). Babu remembers a scene from Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim*, where he finds an impressionistic, montage-like portrayal of an everyday: “it had scenes of crowded trains journeying down the Gangetic plains, alive with the hustle and bustle of *sadhus* and *fakirs* and farmers and soldiers” (199). This montage-like portrayal of the everyday scene in Kipling’s *Kim* offers Babu an alternative everyday like Nimalya’s search for an alternative everyday in the world seen from the balcony, particularly in the sea. The narrative of *The Point of Return* juxtaposes a third-person narrative with a first-person narrative, where the narrator becomes a traveller picking up things, recording scenes of the everyday. The narrator here is both an observer and an image. The narrator is “poised uncertainly between past and future”; he is both an “observer and image” (218). As a recorder of the apparently trivial, fleeting moments of the everyday, to unravel the hidden mysteries lying beneath them, the observer-narrator of *The Point of Return* finds himself to be unable to grapple with the whole truth from the fragments. The way Certeau has defined the difficulty of projecting the everyday in coherent terms, the everyday in *The Point of Return* emerges in a fragmented form and the narrator-observer finds it impossible to create a totality out of it. The narrative of this novel in fact deliberately avoids presenting an unambiguous everyday. The urban everyday with all its trivialities and diversities emerge in the narrative through the observation of the narrator – who is both an observer and an image. The banal aspects of the everyday, projected in *The Point of Return* also present two parallel orders of life. The old order, which refuses to be reified by any official or capitalistic ideology, is represented by Dr. Dam. Dr. Dam’s daily works reflect his adherence to an old world order:

On Sundays, he would turn his attention to the front, to the drain running along the street below the steps leading up to the house. Using one of those spades with the blade at right angles to the wooden stock, he could meticulously dredge the soil and dirt that had collected in the unpaved drain, fully absorbed in the task that others left to their servants. It was as if, with retirement, the layers of life as a veterinary doctor, as an officer, had fallen away to reveal the peasant who had always lived beneath the suits and ties. He had returned to this rightful place in the world, regardless of how awkward it was for others. (18)

Dr. Dam's "rightful place in the world" is the unreified, un-colonized world of the trivial, simple, repetitive daily chores. The consumer-culture created by capitalism is rejected here in search of an alternative way of life, also shown by Nirmalya in Amit Chaudhuri's *The Immortals*. Dr. Dam's habits and ideologies concerning everyday life show a resistant capacity within the capitalist and the institutionalized way of life. In response to his son's request for setting up a Western commode in place of an Indian-style toilet, he says: "Your forefathers went to the fields for their morning chores. In the cities, people use train tracks. Who do you think you are, with your ideas about reading magazines in the toilet?" (67). Like the alternative everyday presented by the birds and the balcony in Amit Chaudhuri's novels, in Siddhartha Deb's *The Point of Return* there is a search for an unofficial, unreified way of life reflected through the foregrounding of the apparently banal aspects. Dr. Dam returns to the older ways of life, like the old Chatterjees in *A New World*; Babu emerges as an observer like Nirmalya and contemplates on the alternative ways of transcending the familiar everyday. Whereas for Nirmalya the familiar everyday bears the possibility of finding out mystery and strangeness within itself, for Babu the strangeness of everyday lies beyond the familiar space. In fact Deb's *The Point of Return* engages a good deal with the contradictory values of the old world and the newly emerging capitalistic life-style. In his collection of essays titled *The Beautiful and the Damned: Life in the New India* Deb shows the shifting faces of Indian economy, its emphasis on globalization and its subsequent impact on different social classes. In the form of a travelogue, the narrative of this book records everyday details and enters the inner zones of individuals' psychology, in the context of a changing country. Deb says that in this book he intends to produce "a unified narrative, the story of the vast, fascinating and grotesquely unequal country, an account of people who, either as celebrated representatives of new India or as statistical details of the other, old India, might be able to tell us who they really are" (26). *The Point of Return* too represents this shifting scenario through the records of the everyday. The everyday does not remain a taken-for-granted reality or the residual aspect of life. It is evident from both Chaudhuri and Deb's novels that the everyday is not merely the known and the familiar. It is more than a typified pattern of human behaviour. The apparently familiar world of the everyday contains the possibility of revealing a complex world of human behaviour. The everyday in Chaudhuri and Deb's novels represents a complex paradigm of human thoughts and interactions.

The everyday has the potential of becoming a synthesizer of the experiences of the immediate present and most of the critics of everyday life detect its relationship to the capitalist society or to the newly emerging global world order. Henri Lefebvre's study of the everyday is primarily based on the idea of the life under capitalism and a hegemonic socio-political structure. He finds an intense commodification of everyday life and for him modernization becomes synonymous with a consumer culture. In spite of that Lefebvre finds within the everyday the possibility of transformation. He thinks that the everyday bears within itself the capacity for transcending the commodified culture. In his treatise on everyday life, *Critique of Everyday Life* Lefebvre says that the everyday is ignored as something repetitive and residual, whereas the institutionalized and specialized activities such as art, philosophy and science are considered as higher or superior activities. He argues that in the pre-modern times the everyday was not differentiated from the specialized activities. Such societies contained a comparatively organic totality of human practices. Human practices came to be compartmentalized only with the emergence of capitalism. The domestic performances and leisure were distinguished from the official or institutional practices: the everyday activities came to be identified as mere repetitive functions which do not need speculation or special attention. Gardiner says: "According to Lefebvre, the everyday has traditionally been regarded as trivial and inconsequential in Western thought at least since the Enlightenment, which has valorized the supposedly 'higher' functions of human reason displayed in such specialized activities as art, philosophy and science" (75). But for Lefebvre the everyday may function as a crucial site from which the subtle practices under capitalism can be analysed. For him "the concept of everyday life constitutes the crucial vantage point from where to criticize the formalized and alienated social practices characteristic of capitalism" (Gardiner 77). Lefebvre believes that within the everyday lies the power to counter the dominant ideologies of the socio-political structure. Lefebvre's intention is to explore the emancipatory, transformative potentials of the everyday: his proposition is that "modern society contains within it both repressive and emancipatory qualities" (Gardiner 77). Capitalism promotes a thorough-going-process of reification which transforms the living, dynamic relations between people into static connections between things. Its subtle politics projects the everyday life world as an emblem of repetitiveness. The result is a homogenization of the concrete particularities

of everyday life world, which denies the richness and complexity of daily experiences (Gardiner 13). This capitalistic projection of the everyday as a typified, repetitive pattern of human practice has been countered by Lefebvre, in his *Critique of Everyday Life* and *Everyday Life in the Modern World*. The novels of Chaudhuri, Roy, Deb and Dai resonate with Lefebvre's rejection of the distinction between the institutionalized and the routinized activities of the everyday. They try to erase the boundaries of the official and the unofficial, the public and the private, the institutional and the popular. Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the carnival also has an association with the concept of the everyday, because Bakhtin tries to reject the abstractions and institutionalization of human activities by the capitalist structures. In *Rabelais and His World* Bakhtin defines the resistant impulses of the popular cultural forms which can disrupt the official or monologizing order of things. Bakhtin sees the prosaic forces of the everyday as its strong potential to counter the dominant discourses of power. Gardiner comments:

Rabelais and His World constitutes Bakhtin's most thorough-going and radical attempt to demolish the notion of the sovereign, monologized subject and its ontological basis in a rigid dualism between subject and object, mind and body, nature and culture, and to replace this orientation with an alternative conceptual and sensory regime that privileges the somatic and the everyday. (66)

As all the four writers under discussion agree to the idea that capitalist ideology intrudes into the lives of the common man it is important to see how the local life-worlds of their novels represent the everyday in relation to the dominant ideology of the socio-political structure and its transgressive potentialities. All of them have transcended the definition of the everyday as a site of repetitive functions; they have discerned the moments of critique within the practices of everyday life. In Chaudhuri and Deb's fiction, I have already shown how the everyday has emerged as a dynamic site of revelation and exploration. Both Chaudhuri and Deb have shown the everyday with its fissures and discontinuities; their characters come to create an alternative everyday through the exploration and resurrection of different spaces which are usually not traversed. Roy too shows the fissures and discontinuities in the everyday to expose the unevenness of the capitalistic forces. Another significant fact about the representation of

the everyday in the novels of these four writers is that none of them have confined themselves in the metropolitan centres, although the theory of the everyday usually focuses on the urban areas under capitalism. Both the urban and sub-urban spaces have been used by them to project the contemporary local, to produce the local knowledge in the context of the everyday. The everyday becomes a site of both critique and renewal in their novels.

Lefebvre's notion of the everyday as a site of capitalist reification can be best understood in the light of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. Although Lefebvre talks about the emancipatory side of the everyday and its hidden potential to counter the official discourses of power, Roy's novel focuses more on the reification of Kerala's everyday by capitalistic forces than on its possibility of resistance. Nor does she completely believe in Bakhtin's idea of resistant cultures. Her novel represents how the capitalist culture reifies the individual, the society and the cultural past of a country. The world of the commodity colonizes the individual and the individual becomes a subject of capitalistic impersonalization. Culture and religion become a part of the entire process of reification. This transforming relationship between heritage, culture and politics gets revealed through Roy's presentation of the everyday in her novel. The way Amit Chaudhuri has observed the contemporary socio-political structure being visible in the Kalighat paintings and in the religious festivals of Bengal, Roy also has explored the paradigm of epic figures, making them a part of the contemporary world. Roy intends to present the everyday, the cultural heritage and the popular religious narrative in the life-world of Kerala as being influenced by capitalistic realism. Roy's *The God of Small Things* presents the "Regional Flavour" of Kathakali dance as becoming a part of commerce, where "ancient stories were collapsed and amputated. Six-hour classics were slashed to twenty-minute cameos" (127). The Kathakali dance, a part of Kerala's cultural everyday, has been rearranged and transformed by the performers to make it suitable to the contemporary audience. Roy's narrative defines the Kathakali dance "as familiar as the house you live in"; there is the mystery and magic in its familiarity (229). Although the stories narrated in the Kathakali dance are known stories, they do not lose their charm, because they are Great Stories. Yet in Kerala this traditional dance form has entered into the "Heart of Darkness" – the realm of commerce. The Kathakali dancers

pray in the temple before their performance, so that God forgives them, “for corrupting their stories. For encashing their identities. Misappropriating their lives” (229). The Kathakali dancer is trained from his childhood for the great task of storytelling; a magic is born inside him. It is supposed that the Kathakali dancer’s body is his soul, because his body is the instrument of delivering godly-stories. The present, however, tells a different aspect of this traditional dance form which stands as a symbol of the cultural everyday of Kerala; it has become a part of the market. The Kathakali dancer has become “unviable”, “unfeasible” and “condemned goods” (230). The colonizing of this popular cultural performance by the capitalistic socio-political structure leaves the Kathakali dancer with frustration: “In despair he turns to tourism. He enters the market. He hawks the only thing he owns. The stories that his body can tell” (230). Roy’s non-fictional work *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* comments on India in the context of privatization of the economy. The first chapter questions: “Is it a house or a home? A temple to the new India or a warehouse for its ghosts?” (20). It is a question which is applicable to the representation of the capitalist realism hidden in Kerala’s everyday in *The God of Small Things*. The chapter titled “God’s Own Country” shows the reification of Kerala’s traditional cultural heritage. The entire chapter depicts the rich cultural heritage of Kerala in the backdrop of commercialization. The Meenachal River, which contains many memories of the twins, Rahel and Estha, reveals the changing reality of the entire state. It greeted Rahel “with a ghostly skull’s smile”, when she returned to it years later (124). Rahel feels that the extreme urbanization of the city has changed the river:

Despite the fact that it was June, and raining, the river was no more than a swollen drain now. A thin ribbon of thick water that lapped wearily at the mud banks on either side, sequinned with the occasional silver slant of a dead fish. It was choked with a succulent weed, whose flurred brown roots moved like thin tentacles under water....Once it had the power to evoke fear. To change lives. But now its teeth were drawn, its spirit spent. It was just a slow sludging green ribbon lawn that ferried fetid garbage to the sea. Bright plastic bags blow across its vicious, weedy surface like subtropical flying flowers. (124)

Kerala's everyday life here displays the bleak side of urbanization – the nature is reified too. The narrative defines it as the “Heart of Darkness” and a five-star hotel chain has become a part of it. It is the present version of the twins' History House, once which used to be the haunted house of a British man who committed suicide for being separated from the object of his love. The smelly paradise is endorsed for the tourists, a fake world is created: the five-star hotel even has raised a wall to screen off a slum, although they have not done anything to stop the smell coming from the river, as the river is the dumping space of all dirt and garbage. The hotel people know “that smelliness, like other people's poverty, was merely a matter of getting used to. A question of discipline. Of Rigour and Airconditioning. Nothing more” (126). The capitalist everyday in Kerala is again reflected through the hotel named “Heritage”, which displays some traditional objects in front of the tourists. The irony is that these objects have been obtained from Kerala's first Communist Chief Minister, comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad's ancestral home. This contradiction and juxtaposition in the capitalist everyday of Kerala have been ironically narrated: “History and literature enlisted by Commerce. Kurtz and Karl Marx joining palms to greet rich guests as they stepped off the boat” (126). Roy's representation of the everyday is apparently bleaker than that of Chaudhuri and Deb, as the reification of the everyday here does not hint at any alternative space or possibility of transformation. Yet the last sentence of the novel which consists of a single word, “tomorrow” indicates a future possibility of transformation in the present status of the everyday. There are charges that writers like Roy and Rushdie, who have received global prominence for their literary works, have orientalized India for entertainment, profit and power. Jessu T. Airaudi states that the writers like Roy are often defined as “curry novelists” and as representing Indian culture and language for Western consumption. Airaudi, however, wants to prove that far from representing an exotic version of India before a Western audience the contemporary writers like Roy have shown “the ‘impure’ mixture of cultures, ‘mongrelization’, as the proper subject of their political fantasies” (8). Rather than representing an exotic India for the entertainment of the Western audience, Roy has shown how local cultures and local everyday have been contaminated by consumerism. Roy uses the everyday space as a site of writing small histories and revealing official discourse of power. For Roy the everyday is a useful site of exploring the political. It is a site of both critique and renewal for her. As Airaudi has pointed out, the impure mixture of cultures in Kerala's everyday is a focal point in Roy's novel. The

Kathakali dancer's entering the world of commerce, the History House's transformation into a five-star hotel chain and the contamination of the Meenachal River are few instances of such exploration.

Whereas Amit Chaudhuri, Arundhati Roy and Siddhartha Deb focus on a kind of everyday which articulates the local history in the context of urbanization and capitalistic influences, Mamang Dai's treatment of the everyday shows an interest in the magic and mystery hidden in the everyday life-world of the tribal community. In *The Legends of Pensam* the marvellous side of the everyday comes out through the creation of a mythical world, which suggests the existence of an alternative space beyond the world of ordinary reality and banality. In the Prologue the narrator introduces the quotidian life of the Adi community in Arunachal Pradesh:

Every morning we sat on the bamboo veranda, my clan sisters and brothers and I, and gazed at the stars whose names we made up according to their configuration. The root of the light was the plough, I remember. Or was it the lady who competed with the gods to weave a tapestry? Now it matters little, except that in these days when we looked at the stars we felt that they were very close and that their fire shone directly on us. (4)

The everyday practices of the community thus encroach into the realm of imagination, magic and mystery. The life-world of the Adi community, and their everyday life which is inextricably linked to their collective memory produce a narrative of myth and magic. Even the stories of birth and death in the community are associated with myth-making. Hoxo – the teller of tales in the novel – is someone who fell from the sky, and this myth seems to be appropriate in the context of the narrative of the magical everyday of the Adi community. The community loves to explore the familiar to reach the strange and the unfamiliar: “Every day the boys found something new. Everyday they explored the hills further and further away from the village, and every day, for many years, they climbed to the flat top of their favourite hill and flung themselves down on the open ground just talking and speaking their thoughts to the trees, the cane bushes and the sharp summer light” (9). The narrator too observes that the tribal land has a unique capacity for creating

newness and magic within the familiar. The very spirit of the territory lies in its mystery and strangeness: “I noticed that the village had this quality of absorbing visitors into a forgotten newness of things. It was a feeling of how things might have been, and a sudden revelation of why it was not so anymore” (37).

Like the novels of Chaudhuri, Deb and Roy, Mamang Dai’s *The Legends of Pensam* too shows the arrival of changes in the once-pristine land of the tribal people. In the novel Jules – a French man – comes to the tribal village as a friend of the narrator. He feels that it is important to work out grass-root strategies for forest management in the region. Jules feels that the resources of the tribal land have been misused with the emergence of changes in the tribal life-world. The narrator comments on Jules’ concern for the preservation of the Adi community’s natural resources: “He said he did not buy all the talk about innocent, guileless forest dwellers. He was concerned that we didn’t value what we had and that our people seemed too eager to sell out everything to anyone who came with little money and with designs to decimate our forests” (42). Hoxo stands in the opposite pole of this money-centric world-view, which is gradually embraced by the tribal people, as pointed out by Jules. He continues to tell the tales of equality and purity. Hoxo talks about “a green and virgin land” where “Food was sown, harvested, stored and dispensed fairly” (42). The last chapter of the novel presents the gradual emergence of a new world order in the tribal land:

The texture and speed of change was visible in strange ways all across the land. A visitor coming from the town for the first time would still see the green hills, the green bamboo and the green river flowing in all directions, but now there were young men on motorcycles roaring across the stones while young picnickers wearing fake fur and woolen caps waved at passers-by. (188)

The way the Kathakali dancers become a part of reification in *The God of Small Things*, the legendary performer MengaX is shown as becoming a part of consumerism in *The Legends of Pensam*. MengaX feels that he “must change with the times or shut up and be quiet forever” (187). The modern microphone which he has to handle now in front of the crowd is unfamiliar to him. He becomes “uncertain if any true emotion could be

communicated through the cold metal pitted with holes and fitted to so many cables and wires” (187).

The old binoculars possessed by Hoxo stand for a medium of viewing changes – of realizing the emergence of a new world-view in the old world order or traditional, established way of things. The narrator peers into the glasses and inevitable changes appear in front of the narrator’s eyes: “I saw, in the distance, narrow apartment blocks, grubby streets, and bamboo scaffolding. I held my breath, mystified, and as I continued to peer intently my sight travelled the horizon and I saw a blue, smoky evening through cement walls and through the hills, suddenly, I saw a view of a bright harbour, and sail boats” (192). In the everyday of the tribal life-world these changes emerge as an inevitable consequence of gradual urbanization; the result is a confusion and nostalgia for the pristine past. Yet changes do not carry a sense of negativity alone, as Rakut comments: “Change is a wonderful thing! It is a simple matter of rearrangement, moment of great possibilities” (191). Unlike Roy’s *The God of Small Things*, *The Legends of Pensam* does not represent the reification of the everyday life of the tribal people in absolute negativity, because as most of the thinkers of everyday life have pointed out, within the everydayness of the everyday lies its potential for transformation and critique. As Hoxo’s binoculars enable a viewer to see both the natural and the artificial, the traditional and the urbanized, it has been signified that the everyday life-world of the Adi community would not lose its inherent magic and newness even in the face of urbanization and consumerism. The everyday in *The Legends of Pensam* represents the actuality of the historical present, the magic of the past and the potentialities of the future.

Amit Chaudhuri, Siddhartha Deb, Arundhati Roy and Mamang Dai treat the everyday as a trope to show or detect the hidden significations of socio-political structures lying beneath the everyday practices. The representation of the everyday in their novels proves that in the conception of the everyday lies the experience of the present. All of them explore the contemporary socio-political structures in the banal and quotidian practices of everyday life. However, their fictional narratives do not focus on the everyday in equal degrees: in Amit Chaudhuri the treatment of the everyday is more

prominent than the other three writers. In fact in Chaudhuri's novels the quotidian becomes a major part of the narrative. In spite of differing in the ways and degrees of treating the everyday, it must be understood that these four writers have detected the potential of the everyday to criticize and problematize the contemporary socio-political structures. The everyday has become a powerful site of exploration, and of production of local, socio-political knowledges in the novels of these four writers.

Works Cited

- Airaudi, Jessie T. "The (In)fusion of Sociology and Literary Fantasy: Arundhati Roy, Salman Rushdie, Ulrich Beck, and the Reinvention of Politics." *Globalizing Dissent: Essays on Arundhati Roy*. Ed. Ranjan Ghosh and Antonia Navarro-Tejero. New York: Routledge, 2009. 3 – 24. Print.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984. Print.
- Baudelaire, Charles. *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*. Trans. Jonathan Mayne. New York: Da Capo, 1964. Print.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1999. Print.
- Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: U of California P, 1988. Print.
- Chaudhuri, Amit. *Freedom Song: Three Novels*. New York: Vintage, 2000. Print.
- . *A New World*. London: Picador, 2000. Print.
- . *The Small Orange Flags: On Living During a 'State of Emergency'*. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2003. Print.
- . "Kalighat Revisited." *Memories Gold: Writings on Calcutta*. Ed. Amit Chaudhuri. New Delhi: Viking, 2008. 277 – 281. Print.

- . "Arun Kolatkar and the Tradition of Loitering." *Clearing a Space: Reflections on India, Literature and Culture*. Ed. Amit Chaudhuri. New Delhi: Black Kite, 2008. 221 – 234. Print.
- . *The Immortals*. London: Penguin, 2014. Print.
- . *Odysseus Abroad*. London: Penguin, 2014. Print.
- Dai, Mamang. *The Legends of Pensam*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2006. Print.
- Deb, Siddhartha. *The Point of Return*. New York: HarperCollins, 2003. Print.
- . *The Beautiful and the Damned: Life in the New India*. New Delhi: Viking, 2011. Print.
- Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. London: The Folio Society, 1993. Print.
- . *Sherlock Holmes: Four Great Novels*. Bristol: Parragon Book Services, 1995. Print
- Gardiner, Michael E. *Critiques of Everyday Life*. London: Routledge, 2000. Print.
- Ghosh, Bishnupriya. *When Borne Across: Literary Cosmopolitics in the Contemporary Indian Novel*. London: Rutgers UP, 2004. Print.
- Harootunian, Harry. *History's Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice and the Question of Everyday Life*. New York: California UP, 2000. Print.
- Highmore, Ben. *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.

Lefebvre, Henri. *Everyday Life in the Modern World*. 1968. Trans. Sacha Robinovitch.

New York: Harper Torchbooks. 1971. Print.

---. *Critique of Everyday Life*. 1947. Trans. John Moore. London: Verso, 1991. Print.

Majumdar, Saikat. "Dallying with Dailiness: Amit Chaudhuri's Flâneur Fictions."

Studies in the Novel Vol. 39. No. 4. (Winter 2007): 448 – 464. *JSTOR*. Web. 17

April 2014.

Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. New Delhi: IndiaInk, 1997. Print.

---. *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*. Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2014. Print.