

## Abstract

This thesis focuses on the novels of four Indian English novelists, Amit Chaudhuri, Arundhati Roy, Siddhartha Deb and Mamang Dai, to examine how their novels reject official historiography's privileging of the narratives of the nation in favour of an alternative discourse of history. This alternative discourse of history, as represented in the novels of these writers, involves the retrieval and reconstruction of lost narratives in the local space and regional peripheries. The novels of Chaudhuri, Roy, Deb and Dai have been selected for examining how they have represented the narrative of the local and the peripheral, and have countered Fredric Jameson's famous statement that all third-world writers write national allegories.

The objective of the study is to show that the novels of Chaudhuri, Roy, Deb and Dai focus on the small and undocumented histories of the peripheries which are usually suppressed under the public narratives of the nationally known events and identities, on localizing strategies of marginal cultures, and on everyday life of common man. To serve the objective of this study, Chaudhuri's novels *A Strange and Sublime Address*, *Afternoon Raag*, *Freedom Song*, *A New World*, *The Immortals*, *Odysseus Abroad*, Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Deb's *The Point of Return*, *Surface*, Dai's *The Legends of Pensam*, *Stupid Cupid* and *The Black Hill* have been taken as primary texts. The primary intention of the study is to show that the novels of these four writers counter the stereotypical idea of a postcolonial Indian English novel, as they do not valorize the public history of the nation. Their novels represent the local histories of the regional peripheries as well as histories repressed in the official historiography. The novels of these writers present peripheral peoples' localizing praxes and performances as strategies for resisting any kind of hegemonic suppression. Moreover, these writers are not merely engaged with the retrieval of the undocumented past; they equally focus on the changing present in the local space through the representation of everyday life. The study tries to show in the light of the novels of the four writers that if a nation-state fails to recognize the existence of cultural pluralities and multiple ethnic identities in the peripheries, the entire construct of imagined community may collapse. The novels of Deb and Dai represent the North-East as an absent entity in the geographical and the psychological map of the country, and in the mainstream literary discourses too. The

thesis also deals with the notion of interstitial space with reference to the novels of Roy and Chaudhuri, and shows that the idea of the nation's horizontal cultural space often gets ruptured when identities tend to belong to an in-between cultural space.

The basic argument of the thesis is that official or dominant historiography obliterates the stories of common man. The novels of Chaudhuri, Roy, Deb and Dai counter official historiography, and the reestablishment of erased identity and revival of undocumented history emerge as crucial subjects in their novels. They show how the past can be reappropriated and a submerged voice of history may return to the present. In Chaudhuri and Roy's novels there is an interest in the submerged histories of common man and in the spectral realities lying beyond the officially recognized historical past. Dai's novels deal with the retrieval of the myths and memories of the tribal communities. Deb's novels too show how dominant historiography of the centre bears gaps and silences. Both Dai and Deb's novels are engaged with the reviving of untold local histories. They deal with the North-Eastern people's struggle for protecting their culture in the face of the centre's politics of appropriation and assimilation. In Roy and Chaudhuri's novels the counter-narrative to the authoritative system emerges through linguistic innovations and through the valorization of local cultural practices. The discussion of local and peripheral histories would remain incomplete without the study of the everyday, because the everyday is a useful site of both revelation and critique of the prevailing socio-political structure. The thesis tries to show that the everyday which is considered as insignificant in comparison to the institutional mode of human behaviour and activities, explores the immediate realities of the ordinary men's lives in the local space. The novels of the four writers are interpreted in the light of their treatment of the everyday as a social signifier and as a constituent in the articulation of local history. Although the writings of Chaudhuri, Roy, Deb and Dai have received considerable critical attention over the years, their novels have not been analysed from a common perspective. In this study their novels have been brought together to show that the need for producing an alternative narrative of the local and the peripheral is their common focal point.