

Tribhuvan University

Critique of Western Modernity in Mo Yan's *Change*

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Central
Department of English in the Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in English

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April, 2015

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Letter of Recommendation

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Critique of Western Modernity in Mo Yan’s *Change*” by Indra Prasad Bhusal, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Acknowledgements

Inspiration always plays a vital role in every progress in human life. I am greatly indebted to my respected supervisor, Amma Raj Joshi, Head of English Department, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu, whose suggestions and guidance proved instrumental to give this research the present form. Likewise, I express my deep sense of respect to Lecturer Mahesh Poudyal for his inspiring suggestions and guidelines. I heartily express my sincere gratitude to those who have encouraged me and have provided me genuine ideas and suggestions.

I also extend my sense of gratitude to my parents Khem Narayan Bhusal and Batuli Devi Bhusal, who gave light to my life and instilled me with the zeal for my studies. Similarly, credit goes to my elder brother Kshetra Narayan Bhusal. I would like also to express my gratitude to my friends; Mahesh Bhattarai, Ram Shrestha and Prakash Pandey, who directly or indirectly provided me pertinent advice. Most important of all, my words are inadequate for my caring, inspiring and guiding life partner Sushila Bhusal and other relatives. Finally, I also thank my dear friend Mahesh Bhattarai for his technical support.

Indra Prasad Bhusal

April 2015

Abstract

This research looks into Mo Yan's *Change* from the perspective of nonwestern modernity. From the time of communist takeover till now, China attempts to develop its own unique mode of modernity. Within a decade, China succeeds in bringing plenty of reforms and progressive transformations. In Mo Yan's *Change*, thousands of schools are opened within a decade after the communist takeover. Even the youths from poor economic background get opportunities to go to universities. The narrator's brother once used to think that university is beyond his reach. But he not only completed university education but got a job too. As China appeared as a self-sufficient country, it witnesses various examples of violence. Tiananmen Square tragedy is the worst case of disaster that has ever occurred on the soil of China. The communist dictatorship of China does not allow its citizens to ask for human rights, democracy and individual's right to properties. In Tiananmen Square, youths mount protest for democracy. The one party regime launches heavy crackdown on them. The tragedy of Tiananmen Square is an instance of how the penetration of western modernity like political liberalism throws country into the turmoil and chaos. The glorious Gaz 51 Truck which has a long history and glory, everybody longs to be a truck driver, eventually becomes a mockery. The historical Truck is sold to the film crew, so it has no prestige and value on the latter part of the novel. The farmers and school teachers have changed their lifestyles and profession. These all changes are the justification of how the western norms and values directly adopted by non-western countries, it is doomed to create undesirable results.

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I. Chinese Modernity in Mo Yan's Writings

This research examines the way in which Mo Yan's *Change* shows the evolution of modernity in China. The sort of modernity that unfolds in China since the time of communist takeover is unique and incomparably different from western modernity. Following the successful communist takeover in China, reforms and change occur in most of crucial sectors of society. On its own internal strength, China emerges as the modern state capable of bringing new and innovative reform in society.

Technician Zhang cultivates unique expertise in managing various automobiles and vehicles. Instead of imitating and borrowing Western music, art and life styles, majority of Chinese people undertake the mission of both reviving and uplifting cultural norms and inventing new practices that make their society more open to change and transformation. Wenli's Gaomi Ping Pong Tour, disciplined pupils learning native music, individuals intending to sharpen their skills, The emerging trend to valorize experience and the tendency to respect merit of an individual are some of the textual evidences which dramatize the process in which modernity looms triumphantly in China.

Chinese youths increasingly castigate those things which remind them of the painful historical past. Zhang drives soviet truck, which China got as a gift from Russia during Korean War. Things that remind Russian or Japanese aggression and hegemony are mocked by the emerging youths of China. Youths like to forget the past and affirm their commitment to making the future robust and secure. In the novel, the narrator tells that it was a far-fetched dream to go to university. But within a decade, he and various other youths get chance to get higher education. Access to education,

employment opportunity, disciplined and rational administration of society, liberal mindset of people at large, establishment of music and architecture are some of the change that unfold in the Chinese society since the rise of communist dictatorship. Society is properly urbanized. Industrialization gains foot in slow pace. The urbanization of Xidan Bazaar and mechanization of agriculture are symptoms of how technology brings within its boundary the essential sectors of society.

The political and social condition of China remains confused and influenced by the western cultural practices. The teacher always wears the army colored Jacket but the boy wants the teacher to wear various colorful Jackets. This change is the need of time. It is the effect of mimicry. The native indigenous cultural environment of China categorically rejects the sovereignty and the unique supremacy of western ideals like universal human rights and democracy, modern secularism, political liberalism, gender equality and individual freedom. The strange atmosphere of China renders even the universally accepted pragmatic ideals of the west obsolete and counter-productive.

The callous phenomena like ethnic cleansing and cultural clash has weakened the foundation of the Chinese society. If western norms and values are imposed in nonwestern countries uncritically, the nonwestern societies fall into chaotic situation. There can be unrest and communal conflict due to the direct tussle between imitated western values and the native trends and culture. Moyan demonstrates how social unrest affects the lives of Chinese people. The obsessive search for the western cultural model in China resulted in crisis, conflict and perpetual unrest.

Mo Yan is a great Chinese writer who has won the noble prize. He is such a writer who is selective in what he presents in his most of the texts. He gives focus on the transitional period of China when China's cultural and social aura is about to be

lost because of the western modern concept of modernity. He has written many books that are directly and indirectly linked with the cultural aspect of China and has developed its own kind of culture later on. Mo Yan employs a terse style in the novel that is characterized by brevity and non-chronological storytelling written in the first-person. His works have rudiments of folk-tale that blend into legend and false notion, inserting it in the magic-realist kind. Mo Yan offers insights into communist ideology and predatory capitalism that we ignore at our threat.

Red Sorghum is a novel written in Chinese at first and later on translated. The choice of language in the book also “indicates that China wants to be free from the burden of English language which is considered as the world’s language. It has various series. The story plot revolves around three generations of the Shandong family between 1923 and 1976” (*Mo Yan and New China* 134). The narrator tells the story of his family's struggles, first as distillery owners making Sorghum Wine and then as resistance fighters during the Second Sino-Japanese War. The novel details civil disputes between warring Chinese groups, including rival gangs and political powers. The book also refers to “the Cultural Revolution and the 1972 resumption of diplomatic relations between China and Japan. It is clear from the storyline of the novel that Mo is the writer who centers his writings in the culture of China which has been attacked from other culture time and again” (*Assertiveness of China* 78). He seems to establish his own culture in this world through his writing.

Mo Yan has written many books but some of his selected novels have created the reign of cultural discouragement to the western thoughts and cultural practices and life styles. *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* is a historical novel which explores China's development during the latter half of the 20th century through the eyes of a noble and generous landowner who is killed and reincarnated as various farm animals

in rural China. It has drawn praise from critics for being the novel able to generate cultural tradition and trend of china. And this book is the recipient of the inaugural Newman Prize or Chinese Literature in 2009. Therefore we can say that *Change* is also a novel which has strongly advocated Chinese culture and tradition and develops its own kind of trend of being modern and unique.

Various writers have commented about the works of Mo Yan. In this context *Change* has also got several acclaim from the critics. Many critics commented it as a work which has lost its mainstream tradition from the Chinese literary tradition and some has commented as being selective while choosing the subject matter. Mo Yan is the prominent author of the contemporary China. The bulk of his literary accomplishment is so magnificent that he is awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 2012. Mo Yan is largely considered as the novelist with vigorous longing for politico-cultural realism. He has criticized several social and ideological bigotries. He always stands for the progressive transformation of Chinese society. *Change* is the distinct novella of Mo Yan. Yiyun Li makes the following remarks about the novella, *Change*:

In *Change*, Mo Yan, the 2012 Nobel Laureate in Literature, personalizes the political and social changes in his country over the past few decades in this novella disguised as autobiography—or vice-versa. Unlike most historical narratives from China, which are pegged to political events, *Change* is a representative of people's history, a bottom-up rather than top-down view of a country in flux. By moving back and forth in time and focusing on small events and everyday people, Mo Yan breathes life into history by describing the effects of larger-than-life events on the average citizen. (12)

According to Li, the political and social issues are merged and modified in the novella, *Change*. In a sense, Mo Yan tends to reflect upon the history of modern China. Modern China has come a long way since the last few decades. Yet it still has to face countless number of challenges and troubles. Mo Yan is of the opinion that contemplation upon history gives profound insight to those who want to alter the course of history of modern China.

Howard Goldblatt is another critic of Mo Yan. He is critically aware of Mo Yan's limitations as a novelist. He enumerates how Mo Yan has injected his own anecdotal experience to portrayal of village. Goldblatt argues thus:

One cannot say that Mo Yan has not criticized China in his portrayal of the village. Rather than exploring the darker undercurrents of society or the depths of the characters, he seems to make it his goal to stay on the surface. Much of the energy of the novel is spent on long and sensuous descriptions of butchering, cooking, eating and other bodily functions. There are too many episodes when the reader has to witness this or that character urinating, and to endure long descriptions of the urine. (27)

Whether Mo Yan has been successful in portraying the characters in their organic form or not, it is not clear. But one thing is undoubtedly clear that daily activities are described in a vivid and vigorous way. The real charm of Mo Yan's literary oeuvre is that he is skillful in describing the common incidents of life.

Joanne Arnott is a celebrated critic and author as well. She looks at Mo Yan's literary representation from the western eyes. She maintains that *Change* is characterized more by the features of memoir and less by the striking characteristic of novel. She reveals the following quality in the novel:

Change is barely a work of fiction. This is essentially a memoir. In contrast to Mo Yan's often expensive novel it is also a very slim volume barely over a hundred pages. But it describes events spanning four decades from 1969 to 2009. While amounting to a memoir, Mo is selective in what he presents. Much of the focus is on the transitional years after Mao's death in the late 1970. (37)

By writing this novel in the form of memoir, Mo Yan launches frontal attack on the transitional politics of China. The constantly shifting scenario of China has affected the common pattern of villagers. The modernization of China is both subversive and uplifting as well. Both the rosy and seamy side of modernizing China is brought to the focal point.

East-West dualism exists at the heart of Mo Yan's *Change*. Through the interpenetration of eastern and western values, the dualism gets the proper momentum. To some extent, Mo Yan addresses this sort of paradoxical issue in *Change*. HuoJianqi concentrates upon this issue as follows:

The novella *Change* projects the decisive distinction between the western literary taste and the literary taste of China. While literature in the West enjoyed steady growth with multiple voices, in China its progress followed a roundabout course. Having a long history, traditional Chinese literature was known for its maturity, richness, and sophistication; hence, it had for many years been rather self-centered and self-sufficient, showing no interest in or any need for interaction with the literature of other countries. At the turn of the twentieth century, however, with the introduction of foreign cultures and the translation of foreign literary works. (37)

Chinese literature is to some extent totalitarian, according to Huo. To this view of Huo, Moyan also agrees with. The literature of China hardly makes room for creative inspiration external to it. It is simply seduced by its own literary parochialism and perfidy. The first target of Mo Yan is to demolish this sort of literary egocentrism and eccentricity. To tell the truth, Mo Yan is successful in his mission fairly.

Maureen Freely traces similarity between Mo Yan modernist liberalism and the literary modernism of Jack Kerouac and Franz Kafka. Maureen Freely makes the following observation about Mo Yan's *Change*:

Moyan's stream of consciousness writing style is reminiscent of Jack Kerouac's *OnThe Road*. His agitated, phantasmagorical prose style has been compared to Franz Kafka's body of work, too. The plot centers on a young engineering student in Istanbul who discovers a new life in the pages of a book of the same name. The protagonist is so disenchanted by the likelihood that he sets off in search of the new opportunity, finding a number of other readers who have become similarly consumed as well as a few people who seek to destroy the book because of the effect it has on its followers. (14)

The main motto of Maureen is that Mo Yan's modernism is not wholly genuine and pure. It is derivative. Whatever brand of modernism represents it is derivative. It appears to have been inspired and induced by the works of Kerouac and Kafka. The darker modernist vision of Mo Yan is related to the dwindling prospect of Chinese Culture. The clash between emerging secularism and the nativism of China lays the foundation of Mo Yan's modernist liberalism.

Marshal Berman is wholly appreciative of the power of Mo Yan in blending the eastern and western literary heritage. He explores the cultural and religious

intersection between the east and the west. Marshal Berman makes the following argument regarding to the synthesizing power of Mo Yan:

The unique position of China, located on the geographical and cultural border between Europe and Asia, provides the context for Moyan's fictions, which draw from both Eastern and Western cultural and religious traditions. *Change* is often viewed as lyrical allegories, portraying a modern China caught between the push to become a secular, westernized state and the pull of socialistic movements. Mo Yan is also known for utilizing self-conscious, experimental narrative forms. (17)

Berman contends that Mo Yan depicts the complex pull between the fresh longing of China to shape itself into the cultural mould of the west and the regressive passion of indigenous people of China to remain loyal to one party rule. In depicting the complexities, Mo Yan has succeeded in maintaining the position of neutrality.

Geneli Gunn is the popular critic of Mo Yan. Her criticism of Mo Yan is highly insightful. Mo Yan is in her view comprehensive in handling the complex and equally delicate issue. Gunn's view is quoted below:

With its fusion of literary elegance and incisive political commentary, Mo Yan's *Change* drew comparisons to the works of Salman Rushdie and Don DeLillo. Here, he confirms that talent, brilliantly chronicling his hapless hero's search for love, revenge and life beyond the postmodern novel. The narrator's brother, a university student in Nankin, lays a spell on the reader with the opening words. Like a liberating enchantment, the social reform opens doors in his mind that

allow him to glimpse both international attention and the possibility of solidarity. (27)

There is the fusion between experimental vigor and incisive political commentary in Mo Yan's *Change*. The use of magical realism and subversive ethos of literary experimentation are the distinguishing features of Mo Yan. Guneli Gunn furthermore argues that Mo Yan has unique talent to project his political commentary in the veil of subtlety and sarcasm. The persistent use of magical realism and surrealistic technique bring Mo Yan to the same footing of Salman Rushdie and other postcolonial giants.

Jeruen Dery is interested in analyzing the psychological on the part of characters. No matter what be the feature and format of this novel, one thing is certain that it contains the unique and crucial themes. Dery's view is presented below so as to reinforce the proposed issue of this research work:

The notion that individuals have the psychological freedom to determine their thoughts and feelings is fundamental to the philosophy of Moyan's writing. He emphasizes that psychological reactions are not determined for people by any stimuli, no matter how powerful or devastating. Examples detailing the horrific experiences of imprisonment in concentration camps are provided to reinforce this theme. (32)

The major character possesses the inner ability to reflect positively on the things they have accomplished in their lifetime. In this respect, individuals' psychological reactions are proven more than a mere expression of physical and sociological conditions. The psychological dynamism is of immense importance to those who are on the way to understanding the core content of this novel. Dery's view is primarily

based upon the fact that slow-revelation has really harmed the major theme which makes sporadic outburst of passions.

D. M. Thomas is adept in exploring in-depth insight by comparing two different novels written by two different novelists. In the last phase of his career, Mo Yan's literary postmodernism is highly derivative. Thomas makes the following revelation concerning *Change*:

Wen Li and Zhang go on a surreal journey, seeking change, and, in a violent scene reminiscent of the bloodshed. Moments before, Zhang had been gazing frustrated at the expansion of transportation. After the social revolution, he becomes aware of "the most magical coincidence or impeccable fortune: the TV screen over the driver's seat was still intact and the lovers on the video were finally in each other's arms.

(37)

Thomas detects the elements of surrealism and magical realism in *Change*. This literary newness has the functional purpose. To reflect the double brand of realities pertaining to the hybrid culture of China, Mo Yan has depicted the shifting landscape which is puzzling to the readers. Whether the main character's journey is metaphysical or surrealistic, it is very confounding to explore this issue. But Thomas assumes that Mo Yan's *Change* is really guiding light to the world of Turkey, which is lost on the crossroad of cultural schizophrenia.

Michael Macey detects the fusion of both optimism and pessimism in this novel. The pessimistic condition generated by the growing existentialist thinking and postmodernism is at the center of this novel. Yet it can also be said that certain ray of optimism lies in the corner of pessimistic world. Macey demonstrates his ideas in the following ways:

It has been called a novel without hope. I think actually it is a novel with a great deal of hope. It finds that even in man's corruption and sickness there are yearnings and inarticulate strivings for a better world, a life with more dignity. This statement is a remarkable example of how erroneous an artist can be about his creation. The yearnings and inarticulate strivings of men for a better world of which Mailer speaks are shown in *Change* with a sense of hopelessness. (19)

According to Macey, *Change* projects underlying optimistic sense in the midst of pessimism. There lies the true vision of the emancipation of people. The postmodern sense of liberation is displayed fantastically in the novel. That is why it is good to give credit to Mailer, according to Macey. In the normal condition, people do have yearning and longing. But in this kind of longing, the decency and dignity of human ambition is not reflected. Only in the critical moment of his life that people continue to suffer and then they develop vision.

Although all these critics have examined the novel, *Change* from different perspectives, none of them concentrated upon the theory of nonwestern modernity. The issue of the critique of western modernity in *Change* is a new and distinct topic which is not hinted by any critic and reviewers. In the fictitious world of *Change* the much vaunted western thoughts like political liberalism, egalitarianism, welfare economics, universal democracy and universal human rights as well as gender equality are portrayed as enfeebled and counterproductive. In the peculiar world of China, the western thoughts turn out to be the source of despair. The native soil of China does not allow the seed of western concepts germinate and fructify easily. Hence, the issue of the critique of Eurocentric thought is really justifiable and

pertinent from the research viewpoint. By using the perspective of nonwestern modernity, the researcher makes the thorough analysis of the text

The researcher makes use of the theory of alternative modernity. The thoughts and ideas of ArjunAppadurai, ParthaChatteree and DipankarGutpa are cited as the basis for the theoretical framework. According to Dipankar Gupta “The model of modernity accepted by India at the time of liberation from colonial rule still persists, although it is beset with contradictions”(141). These contradictions are becoming more manifest with the advent of structural reforms. These structural forms are giving free reign to market forces. The crisis is deepening for the people in both rural as well as urban areas. The resolution has to come from the working people as they struggle to creatively survive under hostile circumstances.

Depankar Gupta holds effective and sustainable political structure as the sound basis for the inception of alternative modernity. He says that “effective political structure that promotes modernization must fall eventually before its own creation. Thus the political system itself becomes an enterprise, a business out of which profits can be made”(75). It begins to follow the rules of any business enterprise in terms of the capital to be invested and the rate of return. Such a system can, therefore, remain neither secular nor democratic.

To resolve these contradictions the most commonly held argument is that of further modernization. In other words, if the economic base is made secure, then the possibility of a modern secular democracy emerging is also easier. To quote Dipankar, “If there is enough produced and enough distributed then both profits as well as some form of social and political equality may be ensured”(82). However, this is an argument that has no answer to the problem of how to move rapidly from a backward to a modern economy. There may, therefore, be much to argue in favor of

an alternative viewpoint for resolving the contradictions. The objective is, according to Dipankar, “to construct a modern society, which has both a different economic base as well as a secular, democratic structure built on that base. It may not be very clear what this alternative notion is. But that is precisely where the challenge lies”(63). Some of the indications are already emerging from the environmental, gender, labor, and popular science struggles in India.

However, scholars critical of Eurocentrism have shown that that the diffusion of capitalism throughout the globe has produced heterogeneous political, social, and cultural effects. These effects bring other parts of the world into being. Such a transformation is oriented towards modernity. ArjunAppadurai has called the forms of social organization he had observed in contemporary Latin American, India, and East Asia as “alternative modernities” (265). Arif Dirlik argues that “modernity may no longer be approached as a dialogue internal to Europe or Euro-America but as a global discourse in which many participate”(Modernity 17). It produces different formulations of the modern as lived and envisaged within their local social environments.

A post-Eurocentric paradigm demands a rethinking of a conception of history. Such a rethinking leads to the production of a Eurocentric modernity. Chakrabarty terms this conception of history “historicism, a linear conception of history as secular, homogeneous, empty time progressing relentlessly towards the present that encompasses all human experience. Instead of allowing for simultaneous incommensurability”(131). This conception of history conceives difference as time lag. More provocatively still, Chakrabarty sometimes suggests “that a post-Eurocentric interrogation of dominant paradigms may go so far as to put in question the utility of historical and social-scientific frameworks themselves”(79). Chakrabarty

proposes instead that “post-Eurocentric scholars conceive of different historical realities instead in a relationship of translation that does not forfeit the singularity or difference of either”(154).

Modernity for us is like a supermarket of foreign goods, displayed on the shelves. No one there believes that nonwestern people could be producers of modernity. The bitter truth about Asian-African present is the main subjection. According to ParthaChatterjee, “It is because non white want to be modern that desire of the third world people to be independent and creative is transposed on to their past. It is superfluous to call this an imagined past. Third world people construct it only to mark the difference posed by the present. The very modality of our coping with modernity is radically different from the historically evolved modes of Western modernity. The third world people’s social change is the modernity of the once-colonized. The same historical process that has taught the people of nonwestern countries the value of modernity has also made us the victims of modernity. The shifting attitude to modernity cannot but deeply be ambiguous.

This thesis will have three chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic, elaborates the hypothesis and then quotes views of different critics and reviewers. In addition, the first chapter makes the mention of writer, his style of writing, some of his works and then point of departure. The second chapter consists of the thorough analysis of text from Dirlik’s notion of nonwestern modernity other perspectives which expose inconsistencies and contradictions of Western culture that neglects an individual’s responsibility to the other. Non-western modernity is also used as the methodological basis of this research. The last chapter projects the conclusive findings of the research.

II. Critique of Western Modernity in Mo Yan's *Change*

This research is concerned with how the Western notion of modernity fails to generate the expected level of change and transformation in Mo Yan's novel, *Change*. In this novel, different phases of Chinese society from communist takeover to the first decade of the twentieth century are described. Technological modernity of the West and modernist attitude penetrate the fabric of Chinese society. But Western notion of modernity hardly generates the expected level of change. The narrator of this novel says that people feel secure to abide by their own traditional model of survival and method of productive struggle. The first person narrator of this novel narrates an incident which brings into light the limitations of westernized modernity. One day the narrator makes a visit to Tiananmen Square.

The disaster that takes place in this square is the greatest disaster in the history of people's struggle for human rights and democracy. In Tiananmen Square, the critical mass of the Chinese youths comes on a rampage demanding human rights and democracy. The then government of China imposes a heavy crack down. As a result, thousands of demonstrators and rebels died on the spot. The narrator does not lament that the catastrophe in Tiananmen Square pushes the possibility of China's development back. Rather the narrator hardly recollects the tragic episode. On the contrary, he proudly stands before the statue of Mao and glorifies him as the initiator and harbinger of progressive change and transformation in society.

Actually, Tiananmen Square demonstration takes place to bring human rights and democracy in China. Democracy, human rights, and individual freedom are some of the components of western modernity. Chinese youth attempt to bring it in China. But the dictatorial ruler of China heedlessly imposed crackdown on their collective attempt to bring modernity. Western modernity is portrayed in the novel as the

breeding ground of conflict and unrest. Those youths who are increasingly conscious of thoughts like political liberalism, individual freedom, human rights and the rational administration of society are responsible for bringing the disaster of Tiananmen Square in the novel. The society of China categorically rejects the conflict-generating western thoughts. China brings progress and change on the basis of its own internal power and native technology. That is why the narrator fails to look into the positive sides of the tragedy of Tiananmen Square. He is driven by the grandeur of Mao's statue. The following extract brings into light how the narrator is heedlessly dismissive of any possibility of change via importation of Western Modernity:

Even if it was only one day, at least we could have our picture taken in front of Tiananmen Square- that alone would make the trip worth the trouble. The very accommodating man in charge gave us a three day pass to see the city and contacted our organization's guesthouse to put us up. Since none of us had a resident's card or a military ID-required by all hotels and guesthouse in the city-we need a letter of introduction. He gave each of us a letter, with an official red seal, which we could use for lodging along the way. (51)

The narrator joins the people's liberation army. He gets an opportunity to visit Beijing and many other cities of China. He sees the prospect of change. He closely observes Tiananmen Square. He is of the opinion that the importation and successive utilization of western notions of human rights, democratic dispensation, and rational administration of society, individual freedom and access to private rights breed chaos and conflict. The narrator is acutely aware of the negative sides of Western thoughts and visions of social transformation. The narrator is proud that his country is making progress gradually in its own terms and technology.

The researcher makes use of the theory of alternative modernity. The theoretical insights given by many theorists of alternative modernity are used widely to constitute the theoretical basis of this research work. Alternative modernity counters the all-encompassing, universalizing hegemonic essence of westernized modernity. The thoughts of ParthaChatterjee, Dirlik, Lennox and many other theorists appear to be relevant for this work.

The term “alternative modernities” is used most prominently with reference to nations and civilizations. It inherently embodies the implied suggestion of cultural homogeneity within their boundaries. It is at odds with simultaneous claims to the cultural complexity of the contexts of modernity. The idea of alternative modernity is anything but self-evident. Modernization has not led to the cloning of societies after a Western model. Claims to alternative modernity are highly problematic to the extent that they fail to address fundamental structural questions of modernity. In his book, *Reconfiguring Modernity*, Dirlik comments:

It is not clear whether globalization is the final chapter in the history of capitalist modernity as globalized by European power, or the beginning of something else that is yet to appear with any kind of concreteness.

What is clear, however, is that globalization discourse is a response both to changing configurations in global relations—new unities as well as new fractures—and the need for a new epistemology to grasp those changes. (6)

Dirlik argues that coming years will demand new ways of thinking our way out of the burdens of not only the past, but, more importantly, of the present. While significant in challenging Euro/American-centered conceptualizations of modernity, the idea of alternative modernities is open to criticism. It is open to criticism because it has

acquired currency in academic and political circles. The historical experience of Asian societies suggests that the search for alternatives long has been a feature of responses to the challenges of Euro-modernity. Alternative was conceived earlier in systemic terms. In its most recent version since the 1980s, cultural difference has become its most important marker.

He Zhiwu is a good friend of the narrator. He is jobless even after completing his higher secondary level education. He decides to go to the nearest city and seek a job. But he does not have money to go to this city. So he comes to meet the narrator who gets a job in cotton processing plant. In response, the narrator asks what happens to your family if you go to the city to seek a job. He proudly says that my parents would not die of hunger because the communist party will not let them starve. Like the narrator, many youths express trust in the power of one party regime to save people from hunger and other daily problems. Youths have belief that country can be changed with the help of its own internal power, resources and technology. They are opposed to the importation and implementation of western notion of progress and transformation. The following extract reveals how youths like He Zhiwu and the narrator envision the development of country on its own basis:

What about your family, what will they do after you leave? The communist party won't let them starve, he said. What will you do up there? Do not know. But it is better than hanging around here till I die, do not you think? Look at me, I am damn near thirty and I do not even have a wife. I have to get out of here. Moving kills trees, but it keeps people alive. To tell the truth, I did not want to lend him the ten Yuan, tidy sum in those days. How is this? He said. If I make good I will not pay you back. (24)

Youths like the narrator and He Zhiwu expect change. They seek job so that they can convert their idle time into money and help their families survive. In the early decades of the communist takeover, the conditions of China are not satisfactory. The country does not achieve substantial level of economic takeoff. But to improve its worst economic conditions, it does not depend upon alien cultural aids, western model of progress and technology transfer. Chinese society tries to thrive by exploiting its own available productive methods. It is adverse to adopt western technological model. On the contrary, it tends to create its own model of technological breakthrough without taking resort to western modernity.

Adding the adjective alternative to modernity has important counter-hegemonic cultural implications. It also obscures the entrapment of most of the alternatives claimed--products of the reconfigurations of global power. Culturally conceived notions of alternatives ignore the common structural context of a globalized capitalism. Cultural change is held as the prime locomotive behind the emergence of alternative modernity. With this respect, Dirlik makes the following responses:

The seeming obsession with cultural difference, a defining feature of contemporary global modernity, distracts attention from urgent structural questions of social inequality and political injustice that have been globalized with the globalization of the regime of neoliberal capitalism. Interestingly, the cultural turn in the problematic of modernity since the 1980s has accompanied this turn in the global political economy during the same period. (78)

As claimed by Dirlik, arguments for alternative modernity need to re-articulate issues of cultural difference. While significant in challenging Euro/American-centered

conceptualizations of modernity, the idea of alternative modernity is open to criticism. It has acquired currency in recent years in academic and political circles. Adding the adjective alternative to it has significant counter-hegemonic intentions. But it ignores that these new alternatives remain entrapped within the hegemonic assumptions of an earlier modernity. Zhang is another character who tends to drive recklessly without caring for the fallout of his reckless driving. New roads are constructed in China soon after the communist takeover. The new road marks the possibility of social mobility. It boosts economic activities. People are excited to see the possibility of visiting different places and carrying goods from one place to the other. Construction of wide roads paves the way for the gradual transformation of society. Zhang's reckless driving is expressive of thrill and hope that people are confident of emerging social transformation and progress. The following extract illustrates this situation:

Zhang drove like a madman. Cars and trucks were extremely rare back then, a time when the country could not boast of a single mile of high speed highway. We were told that the Japanese had built our gravel road when they invaded China and that it was considered one of the best in the country- a single lane each way, it was barely wide enough for two cars to pass. Cyclists we passed quickly disappeared into the cloud of dust we raised, and we were often treated to a volley of curses from behind us. (38)

Construction of wide roads brings mobility of people from one place to the other. Goods and commodities flow from one section of geography to the other. Social change is felt and seen by people. Following the communist takeover, China undergoes gradual socio-economic change. Though cultural rigidity looms as the hindrance on China's way to development, it never welcomes western model of

modernity. People are determined to judge things on the basis of their own viewpoint and cultural habit. For them, the security and expected level of progress are two objects of concern.

Qualifying modern with an adjective distracts attention from fundamental questions of modern history. Furthermore Dirlik adds that “What is needed instead is confronting modernity as historical concept, not necessarily to abandon it, but to rethink it so as to accommodate our changing understanding of its present and its past”(97). The fundamental problem with the notion of alternative modernities is that it is not quite clear what modernity they are alternatives to. In recent usage, the idea of alternative modernities appears more often than not in a cultural guise. The particular cultural legacies of these societies call for different trajectories of modernity than those of Europe and North America. Sara Lennox puts forward the following view in this regard:

Cultural turn in the understanding of modernity demands closer critical scrutiny than it is usually given either by its advocates, who partake of a tendency in contemporary culture to fetishize difference, or by its critics who simply dismiss it for its evacuation of modernity of any substantial content. Like the kindred term, multiple modernities, alternative modernities as concept is symptomatic of another crisis in modernity, this time occasioned by its globalization. Whether these terms help account for this crisis, or render it more elusive and obscure is an important question. (159)

The search for an alternative modernity is of the utmost urgency. The fundamental question is whether this search responds to the demands of identity politics or problems thrown up by a global capitalism. Foremost among these problems are

ecological destruction and the concentration of wealth in ever fewer hands across the globe.

The active and assertive encroachment of western powers like America breeds conflict in the Korean peninsula. America's active interest in the resolution of conflict in Korean peninsula is the medium to intervene into the culture of China. But China succeeds in averting to the compulsion to give an entry to western cultural influences. The following extract exemplifies how China manages to avert and evade the impending western interest and cultural influences:

That bullet-riddled Gaz 51 of ours, a veteran of the Korean War would have been rusting on a junk heap if Technician Zhang had not taken such good care of it. For some reason, Zhang seemed to like me. I was always the one he asked to help him wash or fix up the truck on Saturdays, and my fellow recruits assumed that he was training me to take over from him one day. I figured they were probably right.

Thanks to him, I learned a great deal about the workings of the engine, including how a truck could move so fast. (39)

Though China practiced totalitarian rule prior to 1990, it is customary for it to pursue the policy of seclusion. It brings forth change in most of the crucial sectors of society. Its educational sectors, social sectors, cultural sectors and technological sectors expand progressively on its own terms. In a dictatorial society, it is natural to suppress rebellious voices and voices of dissent. But progress and cultural mobility take place noticeably. The split of Korean peninsula is a strategy to inject the poisonous effect of westernized modernity.

To his own utter dismay, the protagonist began to search for self-satisfying sense of seclusion and retreat. The ideas and techniques which the Mexican leaders

claim to have borrowed and utilized sew the seed of division and fragmentation. The program to modernize Mexico via importing western idylls rather weakened foundation of Mexican society. That is why most of the youths choose consciously a place of retreat.

The most characteristic alternative modernities are those that are called hybridized forms. It appropriates and transforms global cultural forms to local needs, beliefs and conditions. This does not make them extensions of modernity, but “new culturally-situated forms of modernization. Modernity is not so much adopted as adapted and re-created, and increasingly, modernities may adapt other alternative modernities”(Gaonkar 72). Alternative modernities introduce the plurality of modernity, and the agency multiplying its forms. According to Sebastian Conrad, alternative modernity follows the following locus of evolution:

Alternative modernities emerge firstly through the redeployment of modern Western cultural forms: material, discursive, social and even ethical. Yet political modernity have been appropriated and enculturated by post-colonies. Nowhere is this more dramatic than in India.

Modernity is not simply a function of historical development but of cultural differences. (65)

Cultures are not necessarily engulfed by modernity, but creatively adapt it to local needs. It always unfolds within a specific cultural or civilizational context and different starting points for the transition to modernity lead to different outcome.

In art and music, considerable change is found. Without imitating any style and design of western art and music, Chinese music connoisseurs invent lovely and admirable arts. As communication and transportation expand, skilled persons and trainers move from one place to the other. As a result, the society witnesses

progressive change and instant possibility of transformation. The following extract highlights the case in point:

Even though our school was out in the sticks, it was not too far from the state farm, where there was a group of skilled individuals who had been labeled rightists. Some of them, who had rich experience in sports and recreations, came over as substitute teachers. Thanks to their coaching, Lu Wenli took first place in the Gaomiping-pong tournament, and HouDejun took first place in the junior pole vault at a meet I Changwei. They also helped us form a pretty decent military band. (11)

Arts, sports and recreations thrive abundantly. But no trace of western art influence is found in those arts which flourish tremendously in Chinese society during post-communist takeover. Modernization takes place gradually in military band to music band for the purpose of public entertainment. Experiences matter to the art lovers and connoisseurs. Rather than enjoying the copy of any art and seeking vicarious pleasure, they tend to lay emphasis on the original experiences.

Regarding to the necessity to adapt the spirit and ethos of modernity to the local cultural scenario of the third world country, DilipGaonkar says:

Creative adaptation is not simply a matter of adjusting the form or recoding the practice to soften the impact of modernity. Rather, it is the site where a people make them modern, as opposed to being made modern by alien and impersonal forces, and where they give themselves an identity and a destiny. (Mo Yan 18)

Explaining forms of creative cultural adaptation has been a crucial function of certain forms of post-colonial theory in that they engage with the material realities of colonized and diasporic peoples.

It is the copied objects that give instant gratification to people. But the Chinese trend is not directed towards the consumptions of objects, fake objects, and copied objects for the sake of deriving instant thrill and gratification. However boring the process of getting habituated to the original and pristine nature of experiences, they tend to love the original. They develop whatever they want to develop in their own terms. The following extract is illustrative of how Chinese music and art develop carving out its own locus of original efforts and originality:

Boring, monotonous, local noise-making, but the first time we showed off what we could do on the playground-our style, our flair, our appeal, not to mention the high-spirited rhythms and melodies-really opened the villagers' eyes and set their eardrums vibrating. Had any of them ever seen an honor guard? Had they ever heard music quite like that? The school supplied uniform for every member of the band: blues shorts and white shirts for the boys, white shirts and blue skirts for the girls, white rubber-soled shoes and knee-high socks for everyone. (18)

Taste for music and art is governed by discipline. It is guided and controlled in a systematic way. Some people can call it a censorship on art and aesthetics. But the institutions and bodies of organizations that exist to monitor the expansion of art and music deliberately do so to prevent them from degenerating into vulgarity and artificiality. Certain degree of restriction is a must to save art and aesthetics from

getting infected by the vulgarity, commercialization and commodification of art and music.

Although greatly exceeding its brief, a post-colonial-inspired language became the language of globalization studies in the 1990s. Varied as the discourses of postcolonialism and globalization might be, according to Simon Gikandi:

They have at least two important things in common: they are concerned with explaining forms of social and cultural organization whose ambition is to transcend the boundaries of the nation-state, and they seek to provide new vistas for understanding cultural flows that can no longer be explained by a homogenous Eurocentric narrative of development and social change. (627)

What made post-colonial theory so useful was its ability to comprehend the postmodern movement of culture beyond the nation state at the same time as it addresses the particularity of the (largely non- Western) local. This represented not just an appropriation of the language of the post-colonial but also an unprecedented dominance of the Humanities in the descriptions of global culture. Modernities are a theme of contemporary time.

Gaz 51 Soviet truck comes recurrently throughout the novel. Wenli's father Zhang drives it recklessly. Gaz 51 truck is given to China by Soviet Union so that it could carry necessary artillery and ammunitions from China to Korea during the time of Korean War. After China succeeds in keeping American influences and intervention at bay, Soviet did not take Gaz 51 truck back. This means of transportation reminds bloodshed and violence. People talk about how this truck came and where it is used now. This truck reminds that period when China was hectically engaged in pushing America away from Korean peninsula. Western intervention and

aggressive beget adverse effect in the entire zone of China as well as Korean Peninsula. Western modernity and western cultural influence are held by Chinese people as the harbinger of horror aggression, conflict and various other sources of unspeakable violence. The following extract highlights how Chinese citizens are averse to the violence-generating sides of Western modernity:

We were told that the Gaz 51 was a soviet truck, leftover material from the 1950s war to resist US aggression and Aid Korea. The bullet holes from US planes in the cab served as proof that it was a truck bathed in glory. When the flames of war blazed, it had charged ahead heroically amid a hail of bullets, and now, during peacetime, it raised a cloud of dust as it tore down the road. When it passed by, we could see the smug look on the face of Wenli's father through the window glass. (14)

The political interests of Western Europe and America breed conflict in Korean Peninsula. Along with the expansion of political interest, cultural influence and modernity of the west are likely to penetrate China. That is why it is so imperative for China to avert and eradicate the aggressive intervention of America. To cope with the aggressive and interventionist march of America, China has to take aid from its neighboring communist ally, Soviet Union. Soviet Union provides many military and logistic aids to China so that it could tackle the overwhelming influences and interventions of Western Europe and America.

Recognizing that modernities are multiple and diverse acknowledges the multipolar realities of twenty-first century globalization and the rise of the rest. Real-existing modernities are mixed social formations in that they straddle past and present and import and translate styles and customs from other cultures. In addition,

modernities are layered. Some components are shared among all modern societies. The significance of claims to alternative modernity lies elsewhere in the assertion of the right of different societies to define modernity. Western scholars believe that modernization must follow the course of Westernization. This belief has been questioned. The important question is why this question is expressed presently in culturally-inflected claims to alternative modernities. More than the ambiguous evidence of cultural difference, it is the empowerment of claims to alternatives that are in the process of transforming modernity.

Transformations in our understanding of modernity also call for an appropriate past to account for them, which has led to the uncovering of new evidence, or the revalorization of what people have known all along. While this is to be welcomed for rescuing modernity from the hegemony of a Eurocentric historiography, it is not without pitfalls of its own. Lennox contends that “For all its counter-hegemonic implications, so long as it remains bound to modern categories of nations and civilizations, the idea of alternative modernities also opens the way to a historiographical parochialism”(87). Attention to this predicament is a precondition of rewriting the past so as to avoid both earlier hegemonies and pressures to confinement in service of a global identity politics. This requires rethinking the past not just as a source of one or another form of modern political identity, but as a resource for addressing problems of a common human identity.

The narrator narrates that the standard of education in the school of village area is worrisomely low. At school class, students used to laugh at those who used to speak mandarin, the standard Chinese language. The majority of students of village area prefer to talk in the dialect. The standard language is taken as the laughing stock. This situation shows how backward and low the level of learning and education is.

When the teacher Zhang tells students to write essays on their ideal figure, one student writes that my ideal person is a truck driver who is Wenli's father. From this level of learning and education, China succeeds in establishing the finest universities of its own. The following extract describes the level of education in the village schools:

Teacher Zhang was in the habit of reading the best and worst essays in front of the whole class. But instead of telling us who wrote them, he would make us guess after he finished. In rural areas back then, the local's laughed at people who spoke Mandarin, even in school.

Teacher Zhang was the only one who dared to teach us in that alien dialect. A graduate of a teacher's college, he was still only in his early twenties. He has a gaunt, pale face, wore his hair short with a part down one side and dressed in a faded blue gabardine army jacket. (7)

The level of education is miserable. The national language and culture is slowly emerging in the country following the successful communist takeover. Teachers are making their best effort to make people recognize, identify and accept the standard language. With the help of standard mandarin language, teachers try to unite, systematize and standardize Chinese people's collective conscience. From low level of education, refinement and literary, China succeeds in expanding the horizon of modernization. Without relying on the imported notions of western modernity, China succeeds in uplifting and improving its culture and society in a modernist way.

The conceptual premises of alternative modernity are relatively straightforward. According to Lennox, "the first premise is the acknowledgment of modernity as a global presence with universal claims. To think in terms of alternative modernities is to admit that modernity is inescapable"(121). Modernity is now

everywhere. It does not follow from its ubiquitous status. Modernity means the same thing or displays identical features everywhere. “Modernity has assumed different form and content in different historical and cultural contexts, where it is assimilated or translated to the very conditions being transformed under its impact”(Lennox,147). It ceaselessly generates new modernities out of the past, present and future.

Modernity is compatible with different cultural practices. Modernity is cultureless, and can be deployed in service of different cultural legacies. As Carl Pletsch argued “three decades ago, this was the case with modernization discourse which perceived modernization as progress from tradition (culture) to a modernity ruled by technological rationality and, therefore, implicitly cultureless”(153). It has been echoed in the instrumentalization of modernity as techniques. While there is a culture of modernity, it is at all times part of a complex cultural environment. Pletsch makes the following remarks:

Rather than the culture of modernity driving its competitors into oblivion, new cultural modernities are generated out of the interactions between different cultures. This has been the common theme in postcolonial criticism in the insistence on hybridization as cultural process, as well as in kindred notions of cultural translation or translated cultures. (80)

The relationships between the spaces of modernity are moreover riddled with contradictions. Alterity is the product of the processes of modernity in particular historical contexts. The argument is directed against the binary opposition between modernity and tradition in modernization discourse. Such line of thinking conceives of modernity as a functionally integrated whole. It views the relationship between the

two as a zero-sum relationship. This argument captures modernity in a native space where modernity is comprehensible only in its service to tradition.

Within a decade after the communist takeover, China has countless numbers of the finest universities and research centers. With its own strength, resources, commitment and proper mobilization, it succeeds in heading towards the path of modernity. The following extract gives a glimpse of modernity brought forth by China via its own internal strength and capacity:

Colleges and universities had opened their doors again; rural landlords and rich peasant families were eating better, and oxen belonging to production teams were fattening up. Why even someone like me was having his picture taken in front of Tiananmen Square and personally viewing Chairman Mao's remains. Over the next two days, we visited Beihai Park, the Temple of Heaven and, next to it, and the Museum of Natural History, where the most impressive exhibit, for us at least was the dinosaur skeleton. (52)

Reform, change and progress occur gradually in different sectors ranging from education, health and standard of living. In the pre-communist rule, poverty is the dreadful problem. People die of hunger. Now at least citizens have got sufficient to eat. They have got the change to attend to school and universities. Majority of people have become employed and they are confident enough to handle their own problems and address the emerging challenges of society.

To think in terms of alternative modernities is to recognize the need to revise the distinction between societal modernization and cultural modernity. That distinction is implicated in the irresistible but somewhat misleading narrative about the two types of modernities. Societal modernization which involves a set of cognitive

and social transformations is both good and inevitable. It is again relevant to quote Gaonkar:

On this account, the cognitive transformations include or imply the growth of scientific consciousness, the development of a secular outlook, the doctrine of progress, the primacy of instrumental rationality, the fact-value split, individualistic understandings of the self, contractualist understandings of society, and so on. The social transformations refer to the emergence and institutionalization of market-driven industrial economies. It consists of bureaucratically administered states, modes of popular government, rule of law, mass-media, and increased mobility, literacy, and urbanization. (175)

Two opposing sets of transformations are seen as constituting a relatively harmonious and healthy package. This is the idealized self-understanding of bourgeois modernity historically associated with the development of capitalism in the West. That questioning takes the form of proclaiming the end of modernity. Modernity has traveled from the West to the rest of the world not only in terms of cultural forms, social practices, and institutional arrangements but also as a form of discourse that interrogates the present. That questioning of the present cannot escape the legacy of Western discourse on modernity.

The tradition of making meal is gradually replaced with the meal-making machine. Mechanization affects daily life. People feel comfortable. At least they are free from unnecessary hassles and discomforts. In Xidan Bazaar, the narrator perceives this sort of change. He describes “The three of us also stood in line for two hours at a renowned dumpling shop next to Xidan Bazar, and treated ourselves to a meal of machine-made dumplings that were filled with fatty pork that oozed grease

when you bit into them. The machine spat the things out behind a waist high counter for customer at the dozen or so tables up front”(54). Mechanization is an instant act of accomplishment of unique kind.

In society rationally administered, youths like the narrator feels confident. He is happy that his brother gets a chance to go to college. He too is promoted to the post of deputy unit commander. His friend Zhiwu is too happy that he gets a full time job and he is economically able to look after not only his family but his ageing father and mother. The narrator says “my brother had been the first person from Northeast Gaomi Township ever to go to college. That has brought the family so much distinction that following him into college had been a dream of mine since childhood. And now the opportunity to see that dream come true had arrived”(64). Entire nation is heading towards modernization. Without taking resort to the western notions of modernity, the country experiences modernization, progressive change, technological transformation and social solidarity as well as nationwide commitment to progress.

The safe and fruitful way to bring modernity in country is to allow the movement of westernization. Westernization is the threshold whereby modernity comes. But as time passed by, westernization took the aggressive forms. The concept of multiple modernities is a refutation of the triumphalist theories of modernization of the 1950s. The so-called classical theories of modernization all posited a cultural program of modernity. And yet, the progress of modernization showed that modernity and Westernization were not identical. The temptation to equate modernity with a capitalist economy quickly runs aground. NederveenPieterse clarifies the point further:

To think of alternative modernities, and to accept that modernity is not synonymous with Westernization, is not to abandon the fact that

emerged in the West. Modernity is plural, and it confirms the fact that the historical trajectory of Western modernity was not simply a sign of temporal progress but a culturally situated phenomenon. Arguments for alternative modernities confirm the need for cultural theories of modernity. (142)

Alternative or non-Western modernities emerge by the development of hybridized cultural forms through the appropriation of those of Western modernity. Its pace of expansion is facilitated by the introduction of innovative. They emerge out of a relation to other modernities. The processes of appropriation, adaptation, and transformation have been their characteristic features. Westernization has been undertaken by non-Western elites the cultural transformation of Western models has been almost unavoidable.

The pain the victims of social chaos felt at being lost and far from home was intense, and so hard to bear, that their only hope was to stop trying to remember the secret, the lost meaning they'd come here to seek. The following lines dramatize this sort of conviction with which Chinese youths were driven:

We were stunned, but only for a moment. Then we burst out laughing. A teacher by the name of Ma, whose face was red to begin with, turned the color of a rooster's cockscomb. Lu Wenli, who had pulled a long face, chuckled aloud. I was the only one who did not laugh. I just stood there amazed at what had happened, and recalled a well-known tale from our village that our storyteller Grandpa Wang Gui had told us. Once, when a down-and outer named Jiang Ziya was selling wheat flour, a strong gale swept it out of his hand. (26)

Cultural self-isolation and shutting China off from outside influences is dismissed as an unrealistic alternative to westernization. Though cut off from the dynamism of western politics and trade, China continued to strengthen itself in its own terms. Traditional forces are revived eclectically. The pressing needs of the time are addressed innovatively and constructively.

ParthaChatterjee maintains that “The discourse on alternative modernities has little to say on the future that may lie in store for modernity. Its suggestion of alternative futures against the teleology of modernization discourse is at odds with its simultaneous reaffirmation of globality”(186). Its cultural and historical claims to the future suffer from the same uncertainties as modernity itself. Chatterjee, furthermore, adds that “Given the intensification of the mixing of peoples and cultures that characterizes the contemporary world, there is good reason to think that differences as understood in the present day are likely to be re-configured, and give rise to new unities and divisions”(197). Alternative modernities are closer to those to whom they are alternatives. the globalized scholars of current times share a far more common cultural space than scholars did only a generation ago.

Alternative modernity is best grasped as a product of modernity that itself is likely to generate still new modernities. Chatterjee says “Its alterity consists most importantly of perceived differences from an imagined model of Euro/American modernity that has been upheld in the past as a universal model of modernity”(218). The model exists only as an ideological project. Euro/American modernities are historical as well. Alternatives have not always been conceived of cultural terms. In these earlier movements, the search for cultural identity appeared as part of a broader program of social and political transformation. It was beginning with the cultural turn

of the 1980s that alternatives came to be conceived in cultural rather than systemic terms.

Cultural reassertion against Euro/American hegemony was one source. The appearance of new centers of global capitalism was another. But there was also a failure of nerve in the pursuit of alternatives to the rule of capital. Arjun Appadurai exemplifies the concept in association with this aspect of the dynamics of alternative modernity. His view is cited below:

The ceaseless production of alternatives is a defining characteristic of modernity. Modern, like contemporary, is a moving target, and cannot represent a periodization or a style, except in a fleeting and ambiguous sense.” Whether modernity is appropriate or desirable as a periodizing concept is a controversial idea to which I will return below. Suffice it to say here that alternative modernity is a very modern idea not just in its affirmation of modernity but in the aspiration to an alternative form of it. (164)

Cultures that alternative modernities draw upon as evidence of difference are themselves in many cases products of modernity. Modernity does not arise out of the vacuum. It arises out of the underlying norms and cultural ethos. The cultural basis out of which alternative modernity arises is drastically different from that of the cultural basis of westernized modernity.

Modernization is the quest for human dignity in the face of competition from a rival civilization. The choice of holding on to sacred traditions despite hostile challenges may in lead to political subjugation and indignity. On the other hand, the success of a cultural change program is at best piecemeal, and the adoption of the ways and means of another civilization, in order to counter its dominance, is

undignified and possibly redundant. In this vein, Zhang forewarns youths of modern Chinese and other moderates who are prone to encounter a growing demand for stylistic change and cultural adaptation. The revolution of Tiananmen Square resulted into anarchy, chaos, murder and conflict, which was the threshold of western thoughts. The friendship between Mo Yan and his girlfriend eventually proved as indifference because both of them are searching for individual freedom and quest of material prosperity. These incidences leads to the failure of cultural adaption. The failure of the programs of cultural adaptation leads to dystopia and disillusionment.

Youths retreating towards the path of seclusion are a symptom of degeneration and instability. Since the native sources of modernity are directly responsible for the gradual transformation of the society, unrestrained and uncritical appropriation and importation of western values breeds dystopian attitude and painful sense of disillusionment. The following lines cited from the text clarify the point further:

He reserved a luxury suite in the Huiquan Imperial Hotel with a panoramic view of the ocean, close enough to hear the sound of the waves. I do not know if he is relating his experiences over the past thirty. At the same time I was so besieged by the feeling that the book had isolated me from the world, I thought the dark sea would suddenly swell, pull me into itself, and swallow me. I was beset with anxiety and started walking briskly, not for the sake of covering the new world actualizes with every step I took. (91)

Though the narrator is inspired by the preliminary effect of the western culture, he ultimately faces the prospective consequences of immersing and imbibing the ethos and spirit of his own mandarin culture. This western culture is supposed to make the narrator firmly and fully committed to reality. But upon reflection, the narrator is

puzzled to know that he is pushed to the far-fetched zone of imagination. The growth in the inclination for escapism from ground reality is an indicator of an individual's degeneration.

As Aihwa Ong has written about the alternative in alternative modernity in the following way:

Alternative modernity suggests the kinds of modernity that are constituted by different sets of relations between the developmental and the post-developmental state, its population and global capital. In addition, it is constructed by political and social elites who appropriate Western knowledge and represent them as truth claims about their own countries. (19)

Support for these observations may be found in the foundation of claims to alternative modernities in the political economy of capitalism. Alternative modernity is similar to postcolonial criticism in general. It has more than a coincidental temporal kinship.

The relationship between modernity and capitalism is more problematic. It is possible to speak of modernity without reference to capitalism, or vice versa. The discourse on alternative modernity suffers from the lack of systematic analysis between the political economy of capitalism and the culture(s) of modernity. Discourses on modernity outside Euro/America all along have drawn a distinction between modernization and Westernization.

The condition of being delusional is one of the worst consequences of following western culture. Apparently, it is believed that the book is written to improve the insular thoughts of Chinese youths. But the result turns out to be counter-productive. It is by no means certain that delusional aspiration on the part of the readers of this mysterious book sparks dystopia and disillusionment. The miserable

and directionless life of Zhiwu's mother enables the narrator to make use of the theory of how innocent people fall victims to the widespread problems of cultural aggression and displacement. When women are compelled to assume traditional cultural role and forced to make retreat from new modernist role, conflict and crisis arise. In their search for new experiences and freedom, women have to encounter several factors which drag their progressive pace and push them ahead on the way to transformation. Zhiwu's mother had to face similar kind of situations. Now Zhiwu does not know how his mother happens to land in the soil of China. Behind the story of her growth and ending lies another sub-story of deception and treachery. As a result, they are disturbed and disappointed by the conflicting attitude.

The plight of Zhiwu's mother in Xinadu is an outcome of her disastrous marital life. Betrayed by her husband, a new avenue of her life has opened but she has to pay a huge price to bring her ruined life of onerous responsibility to the right track. Her condition reflects several facts about the inability of a person to imbibe position of woman in alien land. Zhiwu has the faintest memory of his mother. Had she access to the economic resources like her husband, she might not have lived such a life of burden, insecurity, responsibility and subordination.

Cultural reassertion against Euro/American hegemony was one source. The appearance of new centers of global capitalism was another. But there was also a failure of nerve in the pursuit of alternatives to the rule of capital. Arjun Appadurai exemplifies the concept in association with this aspect of the dynamics of alternative modernity. His view is cited below:

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The situation in which Zhiwu’s mother is landed puts extreme pressures in her. Since her husband’s desertion, she struggles to be a sober and responsible mother. But she does not become successful as she intends to be because she is hassled and harmed in her efforts by the sporadic outburst of her shock. She does not like to demonstrate her pathetic plight by telling truth about her husband. On the contrary, she tells her children a white lie. The fact that she told a lie to her children is not a very important thing. Inwardly she is weak and diffident due to the disastrous failure of her marital life. But the patriarchal society does not allow and encourage her to tell truth and live realistically. She is compelled to tell a lie to her children because she is bound to live like males.

The relationship between capitalism and the culture of modernity demands serious scrutiny. As capitalism has shaped modernity, it itself bears upon it the marks of its cultural environments. If capitalism, like modernity, assumes the characteristics of its cultural environment, then capitalism in Europe was no different from elsewhere. It sounds relevant to quote Appadurai in this context:

The historical entanglement of capitalism and Euro/American modernities means that as those modernities have been shaped and propelled by capitalism, capitalism bears upon it the cultural legacies of the Euro/American societies that provided the context for its rise to global hegemony. (175)

Claims to alternative modernity, unavoidably present contradictions with the cultural actualities. They may even represent responses to problems thrown up by these contradictions. These competing values draw upon different historical legacies and experiences to claim alternative modernity. They now acquire their serviceability from goal. These goals are often at odds with the social and political ideals.

Assumptions of cultural homogeneity may be appealing to states, hegemonic groups in society, or to nationalists in general. Such assumptions are contradicted by pervasive disagreements over modernity globally. If modernity is indeed everywhere, then conflicts over modernity are not restricted to conflicts between nations and civilizations. Focus on these political specializations blurs deep disagreements within them over the prospects of modernity. It entails questions of ideological orientation and political power. Alternative modernities refer just as easily to different responses to modernity of different groups in society. With respect to this aspect of alternative modernity, DilipParameshworGaonkar remarks:

Conflicts over modernity and the search for alternatives are integral to the history of modernity. Presently, there is the universalization of the contradictions of modernity. It can be perceived as a clash not of modernity and tradition. Where this modernity will lead depends on the outcome of the competition. But it is not likely on the basis of contemporary evidence. To think in terms of alternative moderniteis is

to admit that modernity is inescapable and to desist from speculations about modernity's end. (81)

Modernity today is global and multiple. As claimed by Gaonkar, it does not have a western governing center to accompany it. The dilemma concerning to the origin of alternative modernity can be approached from transnational and trans-cultural perspective. The idea of alternative modernities holds that modernity always unfolds within specific cultures or civilizations. Modernity is, in truth, a richly multiplicitous concept. Believing that the language and lessons of western modernity must be submitted to comparative study of its global receptions, they focus on Asian cultural sites.

Thus it is logical to deduce a conclusion that modernity in Chinese modernity arises out of the complex maelstrom of dynamism underlying beneath China's indigenous culture and the aggressive western cultural influence. However invincible the forces of westernized modernity might be, it cannot completely subdued and sabotaged the inherent fate of Chinese culture to get modernized on its own terms.

III. Consequences of Cultural Amalgamation

The core finding of this research is appropriation of Western idylls and westernized modernity in China can ultimately turn out to be a source of conflict and crisis. The view that western grand narratives boost and uplift the non-western countries is just a myth. It rather generates dystopia and disillusionment. This bitter but ground reality as the east west encounter is tested and probed in Mo Yan's memorable book *Change*. Mo Yan evokes the contemporary problem of nonwestern modernity in China.

The transformation produced by the western culture which calls for the new life and obtaining happiness and achieving personal development. Each reader reads western culture and rewrites through personal viewpoint and it shows Mo Yan's writing strength. *Change* is a self-referential work that continually underscores itself. The anxiety, charm, and passion activated by the western culture transports at a frightened speed, often leaving the readers confused with turn of events, leaving the reader with unanswered questions by baffling spaces of truth and imaginary merge, which makes the work complex. *Change* lives and moves.

Ethos of western culture is something that reminds us of the whole world. Perhaps that's how every culture is, or what each and every custom and tradition. Western culture is part of something the presence and duration. It is something that has been distilled from the stillness or the noise of the world. But it's not the stillness or the noise itself. Struggling between fascinating and anxiety, doubtful about his complete submission to the cultural temptation, Zhang's questions his understanding with other reading experiences where the cultural locus was almost took on.

He Zhiwu's anxiety is not just restricted to the isolation he thinks he might face. The novel is less about finding the object than it is about the journey and what

articulates is a search for intangible things that everyone seeks or expects to find from life, and why they feel bitter disappointment, when they believe that their lives are worthless and invalid. Bus-travel described in *Change* changes enormously and although the one who would reflexively consider the changes positive: better self-consciousness, better illumination, better society, greater safety and the likes. At a more general level, similar observations and a similar sensation are deliberating about the change in Chinese society over the past several decades. It shows that Middle Eastern people spend most of their lives in transportation controlled by others, while passively watch the West develops and creates for itself an identity. The identity theme has shown in other ways too.

Wenli painfully realizes that his world is depending on mistaken signs and haphazard habits while Chinese people's life located somewhere in another facet. It seems he is seeking Chinese future on its own type of modernity and culture. He wants to meet the starting point of life and when he reaches this stage of transition, discovers restlessly and somnolent, somnambulist and awake, in eternity and in time, is both in peace and fighting a war.

At a more general level, similar observations and a similar sensation are deliberating about the change in Chinese society over the past several decades. Thus, it can be concluded that China creeps forward on the way to modernization on its own terms. Without relying on borrowed modernity of the west, China succeeds in undergoing the modernist transformation. When principles of western modernity penetrate the fabric of Chinese society, violence and bloodshed crop up in Tiananmen Square. That is why China develops its own original version of modernity.

China is lost within the dilemma between its own modernization and Westernization. The first person narrates painfully realizes that his world is

depending on mistaken signs and haphazard habits while life located somewhere in another facet. It seems he is seeking Chinese future. He wants to meet the starting point of life. When he is able to reach this stage of transition, he happens to discover restlessly. Disconnection is an essential part of the relationship between controllers and controlled. In the novel *Change*, China with its history of silver mines and its presence of beautiful sunsets on purple mountains is a vivacious presence to be felt almost at every step.

The novel is infused with history and the quest for travel. This fusion luminously captures the enchanting landscape of China. Modernity refers to the condition in which the proposed ideals and ideas happen to collapse in due course of time. Those who are optimistic about the benefits and advantages of proposed plan of reform will have to face pessimistic situation. When irrelevant and new ideas are forcibly imposed on society, consequences can be contrary to the expectations of the people at large. The native Chinese culture and custom clashed with the emerging program of westernization. As a consequence, the Chinese society moved into the phase of turmoil and instability. Moyan exhibits the bitter fact that the wholesale utilization of westernized modernity in the Chinese community generates violence and bloodshed. Whatever pragmatic and practical western principles and values might be, if these norms are imposed on the culture of third world country, bloodshed and violence immanent. It deals with how and why the native and orthodox cultural environment of the modern China has categorically rendered the western values, viewpoints detrimental. No values can claim to be universally applicable. *Change is* a self-referential work that continually underscores itself.

The anxiety, charm, and passion activated by the book transports at a frightening speed, often leaving the readers confused with turn of events, leaving the

reader with unanswered questions by baffling spaces of truth and imaginary merge, which makes the work complex. Technological determinism, which focuses on the material characteristics of technology, represents the most common explanations of either negative or positive social effects of the technological advancement. This position presumes social effects occur regardless of the particular context within which people utilize the technology.

The human values and sensibilities are not realized and merely taken as the commodity. A hierarchy is created in the name of social, economical, political and religious basis. At the time of extreme capitalization, a feeling of grouping and self interest becomes primary factor. As a result, human values and feelings are forgotten. Rather than exploring the darker undercurrents of society or the depths of the characters, Mo Yan seems to make it his goal to stay on the surface. Much of the energy of the novel is spent on long and sensuous descriptions of butchering, cooking, eating and other bodily functions. There are too many episodes when the reader has to witness this or that character urinating, and to endure long descriptions of the urine.

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