

**Thesis: The Price of Our Silence**  
**Exegesis: Modern Indian English Novel**

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**MCW**

**2014**

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_ Hanadi Falki

Date : 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2014

## **Abstract**

The creative thesis titled ‘The Price of Our Silence’ is a realistic fictional novel that taps into the world of the growing 3D Stereoscopic Production Companies in India. The novel traces the lives of the young stereo-compositing artists who meet in an increasingly deteriorating work environment, coming from diverse backgrounds, having different dreams and their own distinct characteristics brought together in the sacred bond of friendship. As the novel explores what it is to be young and restless in the contemporary Indian society, it required representation of multiple viewpoints. So the thesis has been written in third person subjective through the eyes of three main protagonists, and at times, in third person objective through the narrator’s point of view. The question is, will these three friends find the true meaning of their lives after going through various ups and downs together, overcoming all hurdles of hidden truths, jealousy and betrayal to achieve a higher level of understanding, tolerance and sacrifice in friendship? On a larger scale, will the Indian youth realize their true potential and rise above the restrictions placed by the society, and go on to achieve the dream of a truly progressive nation?

The exegesis discusses the Modern Indian English Novels- their characteristics, the major themes dealt in them and the treatment of some of the feminist issues by the modern novelists. Drawing a comparison between some of the contemporary novels and ‘The Price of Our Silence’, the exegesis concludes that the creative thesis would, in future, create its own space in the vast treasure of Modern Indian English Novels.

# **EXEGESIS**

## **Modern Indian English Novel**

## ***Section 1: Introduction***

### ***Synopsis***

Zubeida bids farewell to Vision 3D Studios, the 3D Stereoscopic Production Company that had turned her professional life into a living nightmare. With a renewed hope, she joins Digiworld Studios where she meets Aditya. Rebelling against arranged marriage back home, Zubeida finds a common ground with Aditya who was being pressurized into joining the family business. Before their growing friendship could turn into something serious, Tanya arrives and falls head over heels in love with Aditya. The deteriorating work conditions further push Aditya and Zubeida apart, as both battle with their personal life issues along with professional ones. One thing leads to another and Aditya ends up lying to both the girls to avoid hurting their feelings. The work atmosphere forces them to take fatal decisions and when the truth finally emerges, their friendship is tested to the point of breaking apart. *'The Price of Our Silence'* is a story of the complicated relationships between three friends tested against the intense work environment of the Indian 3D Stereoscopic Production Industry. It is a coming-of-age story focusing on the psychological and moral growth of these three friends leading to the realization of their true purpose in life.

The novel falls under the category of 'Indian English Novel' (IEN) and is set in contemporary India, where the youth is going through a phase of metamorphosis. It examines what it is to be a young Indian in this century through the characters of Zubeida, Tanya and Aditya who are a part of the 3D Stereoscopic Production Industry in India. Against the backdrop

of this blooming industry, lie the dark secrets of race for power, status, favoritism, company politics and exploitation. The novel traces the lives of the young stereo-compositing artists who meet in such a work environment, coming from diverse backgrounds, having different dreams and their own distinct characteristics brought together in the sacred bond of friendship. The question is, will these three friends find the true meaning of their lives after going through various ups and downs together, overcoming all hurdles of hidden truths, jealousy and betrayal to achieve a higher level of understanding, tolerance and sacrifice in friendship?

The novel deals with the issues faced by the youth of India today, particularly the feminist issues. On one hand we have the traditional Zubeida, fighting with herself to break the bonds without rupturing the sacred threads of her beliefs and deep rooted cultural values. The other extremity to this character is Tanya, who has always been a rebel to the outside world, keeping her image clean and pious within her family. She learns to embrace her true self casting aside the rebellious disguise she had always been proud of. The third angle comes from Aditya who represents the confused angry young man of today's generation. His life takes unexpected turns and he is forced to swallow his false pride and come to terms with the reality of his life.

***The motivation behind my creative work:***

Having worked in the Indian 3D Stereoscopic Production Industry myself, I want to use my personal experiences to depict the reality behind the glamorous scenes and the problems face by this sector of Indian youth. India has a number of 3D Stereoscopic Conversion and Visual Effects Studios which handle projects for leading production houses of Hollywood and UK. The

Indian Studios are entrusted with high profile film titles by the industry's top filmmakers because of the high quality output at unbeatable prices and competitive delivery time. Behind the success of this industry lies the harsh reality of miserable work environment where the employees are considered machines instead of artists. The life of these underpaid stereo-compositing artists is confined within the boundaries set by the dictators sitting across at the other end of the world, pretending to be oblivious of the extent of exploitation undergoing in the companies outsourced to India. Amidst the supposedly meager issues of unpaid overtime, unbearable work pressure, impossible deadlines and cut throat competition set by the company, the artists undergo their own personal issues of rivalry, quest to prove themselves, family pressures and maintenance of social status.

The sad reality of a majority of Indian youth today is their confusion about the major aspects of their lives that are shaped detrimentally by this new form of Capitalism. Despite the amount of time, hard work and financial investment involved to reach a certain point in life, the youth ends up questioning whether it was all worth it. Apart from the career decisions the Indian youth today, particularly the women, carry the burden of maintaining a modern outlook without forgetting their traditional values and cultural ethics.

*'The Price of Our Silence'* is a fictionalized critique of the global companies entering India and the struggles the young Indians go through, both personally and professionally. I felt the need to expose what I went through during the two years of working in such an industry; to make the readers aware of what goes behind the glamorous output of having Indian names featured in the credit list of Hollywood blockbusters. As Varughese and Dawson (2013) proclaimed, "The notion of New India is often grounded in a sense of economic growth and

prosperity. Such enhanced fiscal activity has meant that India is increasingly a ‘global player’ in the world’s economics and part of this growth is due to its dexterity in BPO activity. BPO activity ranges from call centres, film dubbing, business process analysis, academic journal proofing and editing, to IT support for some of world’s biggest brands and corporations.”(p.71) (E. Dawson, 2013)

This makes my novel depict the reality of not only the Indian 3D Stereoscopic Production Industry in particular, but also the contemporary Indian capitalist society (BPO) to an extent, along with the personal issues of the characters, their bonding and education. Although the novel deals with serious issues of contemporary India, I intend to keep it light and humorous too. To balance the serious characters of Zubeida and Aditya, I intend to make Tanya silly and childish. The interactions between the characters and the incidents that lead to their metamorphosis will be slightly humorous so as to deal with the serious topic in a light vein. Having said that, I don’t want the novel to fall under the category of, what Varughese and Dawson (2013) described as, ‘Chick Lit’- “Today’s body of writing that we might call ‘chick lit’ is mainly written by women, with a female protagonist who, in various ways, faces challenges, questions and changes in contemporary Indian society, these narratives often include a ‘love’ or ‘romance’ element and are often narrated humorously.” (p.41) (E. Dawson, 2013). I intend to avoid the novel being cast off as a mere Chick Lit- the main purpose of writing it shouldn’t get lost amidst the love story of Zubeida, Aditya and Tanya. After reaching the end of the story, the reader should be able to relate with the various issues faced by contemporary Indian youth and understand the reality behind the Indian 3D Stereoscopic Production Industry.

### **Exegesis Outline:**

The exegesis explores the 'Modern Indian English Novel' - its characteristics, themes and topics it deals with. The exegesis will also be focusing on the gradual shift in the portrayal of women by women novelists. It also explores how men's perception of women is dealt with in Indian English Novels as compared to the representation in my novel through the characters of Aditya, Tarun and Vimal.

The exegesis also discusses my own dilemma of writing about India and the perspective of Generation Z Indians, which is almost impossible to sum up due to its diverse nature. Salman Rushdie asks in his *Midnight's Children* (Rushdie, 1981/2010), "Is this an Indian disease, this urge to encapsulate the whole of reality?"(p.97). Richard Cronin (1987), replied to this question in his article for *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* (Cronin, The Johns Hopkins University Press/ 1987), "The answer is, I think, yes, but it is a disease to which only those like Rushdie, who write about India in English, are vulnerable. To write about India in any of its vernaculars, even in Hindi its national language, is inevitably to divide it."(p.201). The exegesis supports that it's not possible to embody the impossible diversity of India into one individual or even a group of individuals. *'The Price of Our Silence'* doesn't attempt to encapsulate the whole of contemporary India. Rather what it does is, portray a certain section of the few thousand middle and upper class families whose children start their career in the promising Indian 3D Stereoscopic Production Industry, particularly the female gender. The exegesis concludes with the discussion of how *'The*

*Price of Our Silence* intends for a global acceptance of the theme of the dilemmas faced by the youth in 21<sup>st</sup> century urban Indian society.

## ***Section 2: Theoretical Section***

### **‘Indian English Novels’ (IEN):**

Indian English Literature (Indo-Anglian literature) is the body of literary work by writers of Indian origin (or descent) who write about life in India or life of Indians living abroad, in English language although their native language could be one of the numerous languages spoken in India. The origin of Indian English Literature can be dated back to 1793, when Sake Dean Mahomet’s book *Travels of Dean Mahomet* (Mahomet, 1794/1997) was published. But the IEN came into existence a few decades later in 1864 with the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterji’s *Rajmohan's Wife* (Chatterji, 1864/2009). Right from that time when it was successfully established that it was possible for Indian life and Indian scenes to be represented in a foreign language without being imitative of any other culture, Indian novels have come a long way into being internationally recognized and showered with distinctions in the western academic world. The progress of the nation is propelled by the unifying force of Indian English. “Indeed, Indian English has gained the status of world literature... the readers can find that Indian English writers have become shining stars in the galaxy of global literature.”(Arockiam, 2013). The IEN has come a long way in the hands of writers like Vikram Seth, Upamanya Chatterjee, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Thumpha Lahiri, Salman Rushdie,

Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Markandaya and Manju Kapu who have emerged as the Modern Indian English Novelists. The changing scenario in Indian fiction in English has witnessed change in tone, temperament and thought-content as a result of the novelist's newly acquired conviction and maturity. The Indian Fiction has made its own platform and got international recognition and distinctions in the western academic world. Indian writers such as Rabindranath Tagore and V. S. Naipaul have been honoured with Nobel Prize for their valued contributions to literature. Salman Rushdie won the Booker Prize (1981) for his novel "Midnight Children". Arvind Adiga and Arundhati Roy have been awarded the Booker Prize for their novels. M. G. Vassanji and Rohinton Mistry were honoured with the Giller Prize. Jhumpha Lahiri won the 2000's Pulitzer Prize for "Interpreter of Maladies". "It proves that the Indian novelists are planting their firm roots in the field of world fiction."(p.1) (Wagh, 2013).

### **Characteristics of 'Indian English Novels':**

A novel written by an Indian automatically gets enriched with the exotic innate qualities, social and cultural impacts, and geographical implications; without any conscious or deliberate effort to make the work distinctively Indian. Indian novels have their own characteristic form of having an Indian background, with the application of the native sensibility while adapting the foreign language. They depict the spirit of the Indian ethos, reflect the embedded culture present in every Indian and portray the problems arising out of the pressure generated by the society on an individual's life. The sociocultural context is an inherent part of the Indian novels as Indians, in general, are greatly affected by the culture that they live in or are educated in, and the people

and institutions that they interact with. The Indian novels are characterized by the spiritual and moral content and in the ethics and ideals they uphold.

*'The Price of Our Silence'* is characteristically Indian in every regard. The moral dilemmas of the three main protagonists are generated by Indian society. It is in India that you can find a woman agreeing to see the prospective grooms for an arranged marriage as Zubeida does, putting aside her own desires. A grown Indian man can relate to Aditya, his struggle and the social taboo associated with refusing a father's family business for the sake of working in the movie industry. The cultural upbringing makes Tanya's character such opposite contrasts of having the guts to break all bonds yet whimper at the thought of bringing up the topic of love with her family members. Apart from the moral complexities of an Indian life, *'The Price of Our Silence'* is enriched with the world seen through the eyes of Indians. The inherent fear of every woman living in the capital city, Delhi; the popular street food of all Indians - '*golgappas*'; the essential part of living in Mumbai - the consumption of '*pav*'; the rains of Lonavla, and the everyday road scenes of any city in India - are represented through the eyes of true Indians. An Indian English Novel will always have some inherent quality of this vast country embedded in the text and sometimes even in the subtext. Just as the life in Kerala's village, Aymanam, can be visualized by reading Arundhati Roy's wildly acclaimed novel, *'The God of Small Things'* (Roy, 1997); the decaying and stagnate life of Old Delhi comes to life through Anita Desai's *'Clear Light of Day'* (Desai, 1980/2000); the Tamilian and Punjabi cultures can be experienced through Chetan Bhagat's *'2 States: The Story of My Marriage'* (Bhagat, 2009); similarly the life of Pune's IT sector is depicted in *'The Price of Our Silence'*.

Superle (2011) states that, “The Indianness signifiers in the Modern Indian Novels is not limited to the eroticized stereotypes like magic, kings, queens, elephants and tigers. They include signifiers like Indian settings, names, and the centrality of Indian food or other culturally identifiable objects within the plot that provide cultural resonance.” (p.107) (Superle, Routledge NY/2011). In this sense, Aditya’s favourite pani puris (spicy snack) or Zubeida’s *siwayein* (vermicelli dessert) or Tanya’s *gulab jamuns* (sweet dumplings) provide a tangible introduction of Indian culture in *‘The Price of Our Silence’*. After all, Superle (2011) rightly says that, “... food is a powerful tool that fosters a sense of national belonging, cultural identity, and pride, thereby fulfill the ideological goals of these texts by establishing a positive sense of Indianness.” (p.114) (Superle, Routledge NY/2011)

Although *‘The Price of Our Silence’* has an overarching sense of Indianness, writing about one’s culture in a foreign language can be full of pitfalls – a likelihood of imitating narrative styles, plot devices and framing rhetorical tactics. According to Arockiam’s (2013) research, it’s a popular argument amongst the regional writers that “writing in English in India is a severe handicap, as it tends to make their writing export oriented.”(Arockiam, 2013). Quoting some novels such as Pankaj Mishra’s *The Romantics*, Arockiam (2013) points out that Hindi writers like Rajendra Yadav argue that “Indian Writers in English take a tourist look at India,” and the characters do not represent “the inner psyche of the people.” (Arockiam, 2013). Arockiam (2013) sums up by saying that, “As the writers' contributions are a creatively written travelers' guide, they travel into Indian culture and describe a bit of geography; but their approach is western ("English").” (Arockiam, 2013). I believe it’s unfair to chalk up all IENs into this description. As K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar (1973), said in his lecture on 'Indian Writing in

English' at the University of Leeds in January 1959, "Indian writing in English is but one of the voices in which India speaks. It is a new voice, no doubt but it is as much Indian as the others."(p.3) (Iyengar, 1973). Indian novelists tap into their rich heritage of Sanskrit and Persian narrative traditions and various folk narrative forms to create their own individual form in English. As Bhabani Bhattacharya (2013) states: "The fundamental right of a creative artist to express himself in whatever manner he likes cannot be denied and the concept of creative freedom would include the medium of expression to which the writer, out of his inner urge, commits."(p.2) (Wagh, 2013).

*'The Price of Our Silence'* follows the experimental quality of IENs by narrating the story in straightforward English with some of the native Indian words such as '*yaar*' (friend), '*Bhukards*' (famished people), '*Firangi*' (foreigner) etc seamlessly sewn in. Just as Raja Rao's '*Kanthapura*' (Rao, 1938/1970) shows the flavor and nuance of the long sentences joined by idioms and expressions that were a part of the dialect of spoken Kannada of South India, '*The Price of Our Silence*' uses the long sentences to depict the rapid thought process of the contemporary Indian youth irrespective of their native hometowns. On the whole, it is safe to say that the IEN has retained this experimental and innovative quality to the present day making it the global voice through which India speaks.

### **Themes Dealt with in 'Modern Indian English Novels':**

In an attempt of broad categorization, Indian literature in English can be divided into two distinctive phases. One comprises the fantasy of the British colonial governance of India that got

dissolved with the independence of the country, and the other is the reinstated fantasy of the new sovereign nation state. "The history of the colonial governance in India is in one sense the history of confrontation between tradition and modernity and yet in another intriguing and more comprehensive sense it defines the ethics of the imperial center." ("Continuum Encyclopedia of British Literature," 2006). The Indian English Novelists have tapped into the various aspects of this theme. Veteran Indian novelists such as Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and R. K. Narayan, who have closely observed both the colonial and postcolonial eras, have portrayed realism, humanism and the conflict between Indian values and other traditions through their work. In the post-independence era, the cultural developments and aestheticizations related to postcolonial consciousness, the psycho-historical fantasy of the new nation and postmodernist skepticism is the greatest achievement of Indian literature in English.

*'The Price of Our Silence'* explores postmodernist skepticism through the characters of Aditya, Tarun and even Amaan to an extent. The Indian youth today seems to have lost faith in the democracy and judiciary system of India. They are skeptical of almost all of the basic human values but somewhere there is still a hope of recovery. In *'The Price of Our Silence'* Tarun mocks Zubeida all the time, yet he secretly admires the moral values she upholds. Amaan has become the bitter cynic who is hell bent to make everyone miserable around him just as the world has conspired to make him one. Aditya recognizes the negative forces around him, yet he acts as the bystander silently brooding over the harsh truths prevailing in the society. Zubeida on the other hand attempts to make a difference, even if it's a small one. She represents the hope in the Indian youth when she decides to take things in her hands. It is a more positive hope than the one that Balram represents in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (Adiga, 2008). Balram bends all rules to

get out of his miserable condition while Zubeida grasps opportunities of making a positive change even when she is trapped amidst her own problems. Just as Balram resorts to extremities like blackmailing and murder to achieve his sole aim of becoming an entrepreneur; when the occasion arises, Aditya in *'The Price of Our Silence'* turns violent and breaks into a closed pharmacy, forcing the pharmacist to give him the medicines and supplies for his father's operation. The Indian youth today have the tendency to resort to dark tactics when the occasion demands. Even the pious character of Zubeida makes a fake prescription and bribes the pharmacist when she found herself stuck in a tricky situation. In the entire history of this country there have been innumerable instances of angry youth resorting to violence and revolting against suppressors, especially against foreign rule (Bhagat Singh being a classical example of revolutionary young extremists during the struggle for Independence). "Urban youth is increasingly becoming unmanageable proposition for Indian society and polity alike. Alienation of youth from the value premises of their socio-cultural milieu... (is) symptomatic of a severe structural stress creating ground for these anti-social and disintegrative cognitive behavioral-cultural responses of the urban youth in India."(p.89-90) (Mahajan, 1995)

The youth today see the foreign investments in India as a golden opportunity for the economic development of the country. But, as in the past, it comes with a price. "Western scholars have been forced to admit that the weakening of social ties of the youth intensified by the sharp rise in youth unemployment has resulted in youth protest being directed more against the entire system of capitalist production than simply against their material situation."(p.84) (Tripathi, 1995). Capitalism and so-called "free-market" practices have worked to benefit the prosperous few who manage the economy and dictate social policy. The prevailing capitalist

social relations emphasize money and acquisition over caring for people's basic needs and fostering community. "This problem-complex seems to be mainly created by lop sided social development processes initiated during colonial rule, nurtured and accelerated by specific politico-economic processes of the post-colonial era. It is a logical consequence of the 'planned' faulty modernization growth strategies pursued by the post-colonial Indian state." (p.89) (Mahajan, 1995). The youth see this as a dilemma of choosing progress while ignoring the social consequences. What Suder Rajan (2011) aptly calls "the project of modernization-without-westernisation." (Rajan, Apr 2011). The characters of *'The Price of Our Silence'* represent the different facets of such Indian youths - from the extremities of Aditya's character refusing to be a part of such a community to Tarun's persistence of power and success resorting to any means to reach the top of the same community. A similar theme can be found in Chetan Bhagat's *'One Night @ The Call Centre'*(Bhagat, 2008). As Varughese and Dawson (2013) rightly observe, "Bhagat's novel, although interested in the personal lives, hopes and dreams of the WASG team, essentially questions the role of India as a service provider economy in today's world. In politicizing the day-to-day activity of the seemingly banale goings-on of the call centre, managed by everyday people with their own problems and issues, the novel raises questions about globalization and the very 'shared' world we live in."(p.79) (E. Dawson, 2013)

Similar topics have been represented throughout the Indian Literature in English by various Indian writers. "Not that political subjects are in short supply in India- corruption, nepotism, developmentalism, militarism, economic liberalization, religious fundamentalism, casteism, and gendered violence are obvious targets, among numerous others-and they are freely availed of by writers high and low, in all the languages. Writing in English in India, the

intellectual is the bearer of liberal thought in relation mainly to certain issues like communalism, cultural nationalism, the fate of minorities, or gender. To these we can add the environment as a recent concern.” (*Women Empowerment In Indian English Novels English Literature Essay*," November 2013). Some theorists focus on yet another dominant theme of Modern IENs- The age-old problems of Indian womanhood. “From Raja Ram Mohan Roy to the youngest Indo-English writers, the continuous absorption of the spirit of modernity, science and rationality, and the stress on forging a balance between tradition and modernity can be found and this has brought forth the new awareness towards the archetypal themes and national ethos.(p. 4)”(Shukla). The current fictional world of Indian writers writing in English encompasses a diverse range of themes related to the freedom struggle, partition holocaust, social evils in the form of poverty, corruption, religion, caste, low status of women and so on. “The women writers of the present century have the same thematic concerns but the treatments are their own.(p. 5)”(Shukla). A detailed discussion of this issue is presented in the next section.

### **Feminism in ‘Indian English Novels’:**

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century there has been an interesting development in Indian Literature written in English. Feminism, which isn’t entirely new in Indian Literature, has been given a new life in the hands of distinctive Woman writers. “Indian writers in English have also come out of their cocoons of "non-attachment" and have started acknowledging the status of the Indian woman in a male-dominated society... The concept of Indian womanhood is as divergent as the country itself and has undergone drastic and dramatic changes from era to era.(p.

1)” (Shukla). Sharda Iyer (2003) observes that in India, “literature all along has been tuned to the point of view of the male element. Woman is often ‘marginalized,’ ‘repressed’ or ‘silenced’ in literary work” (Iyer, Sarup, New Delhi/2003). During the last few decades, the image of women in fiction has undergone a gradual change from the traditional portrayal of women, emphasizing their self-sacrificing natures and endurance levels, characterized in terms of their victim status.

Initially writers such as Sarat Chandra Chatterjee had created memorable portraits of the traditional woman. The common factor in all his novels such as *Devdas* (Chatterjee, 1917/2002), *Majhli Didi* (Chatterjee) and *Datta* (Chatterjee, 1918/2005) was the deep empathy and understanding of the situation of women in his time, which was hard for most male writers to match. Much of his writing bears the mark of turbulence of society due to the Indian National Movement, becoming a powerful weapon of social and political reform. *Devdas* (Chattopadhyay, 1917/2002) depicts the social evils such as the dowry system and caste differences that prevent the happy ending of a sincere love story. Just as Parvati braves the social stigma and visits Devdas at night to ask him to accept her hand in marriage; Tanya in ‘*The Price of Our Silence*’ dares to go against her religious parents and bravely asks Aditya for a future together. The dowry issue, that is a root cause of Parvati’s family disgrace in *Devdas* (Chattopadhyay, 1917/2002), is also discussed in ‘*The Price of Our Silence*’ when Vimal justifies giving dowry for his sister, “If we want to attract a decent groom, we have to be prepared to shell out a huge dowry. It’s kind of an insurance for the bright life of our sister. So it’s not that bad.” Zubeida advises Vimal not to succumb to the pressure of providing dowry for his sister. She makes a bold statement, which resonates with the modern thought process of majority of educated Indians, when she claims that, “The best insurance that a girl can be given is a proper education and a steady career. That way

she can assure a bright future for her family herself instead of depending on her future groom to give her a comfortable life.” Social evils such as dowry are still present in Indian society and the social stigma associated with the inter-caste and interreligious marriages is a dominant factor of failed love stories. *‘The Price of Our Silence’* deals with it from the perspective of modern Indian youth.

The image of women in Indian fiction has undergone a significant change during the last four decades. As Indrani Sen (2014) states that “...in the earlier half of the century a wide range of social practices such as widow immolation, polygamy, infant marriage, female infanticide, enforced female illiteracy, prohibition of widow remarriage and practice of female seclusion were targeted, the focus increasingly shifted to addressing the problem of female illiteracy through the promotion of education.”(p.23) (Sen, Sage Publications/ 2014 ). Contrary to these issues dealt with in earlier novels, the Modern IENs saw the emergence of conflicted female characters searching for identity, who asserted themselves and defied marriage and motherhood. “The fictionalization of women's problems and their study forms another significant aspect of contemporary Indian English fiction. How women suffer due to patriarchal hegemonic structures and the way these women protest against their subjugation forms the central concern in a number of fictional writings.”(p.9) (Kulbhushan Kushal, 2011). *‘The Price of Our Silence’* discusses feministic issues like career choices, premarital sex, abortion, arranged marriage and various other problems faced by the contemporary Indian women without becoming didactic or falling under the category of social novels.

The portrayal of women’s view point regarding marriage underwent a massive change from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife* (Chatterji, 1864/2009), where one of the

central characters remarks early in the novel, “Marriage is called a lottery”. Sukanya Banerjee (2014) nailed the issue with her words, “By adding a random element of chance to the divinely sanctioned institution of marriage (as it was then widely perceived), the statement opens up marital relations to a kind of speculative scrutiny.”(p.481) (Banerjee, Cambridge University Press /2014). Not discussing the speculations around this sacred institution represented in the various novels which dealt with the situation of married women in contemporary India, *‘The Price of Our Silence’* is more about the young women on the threshold of getting married in the near future. Although Zubeida and Tanya are poles apart considering their personalities, yet they have this silent acceptance of the fact that Indian society regards marriage as an imperative rather than an alternative for a young unmarried woman. The difference is portrayed in the way they react to this default universal assumption that an unmarried young Indian woman is necessarily awaiting marriage. Zubeida tries to delay the onset of marriage without hurting the sentiments of her beloved family. Lisa Lau (2010) sums up Zubeida’s dilemma when she speaks of it as being a common struggle for a majority of contemporary Indian women, “This is a difficult, even painful process, struggling with her deep-rooted desire not to hurt or distress well-meaning and well-loved family members, departing from traditional norms and expectations, and venturing into the fearful unknown, into previously uncharted, unsanctioned territories.(p.285) (Lau, October 2010). Tanya, on the other hand, chooses to let her family live in the bliss of having a model daughter while she goes behind their back and live the life that she knows she wouldn’t enjoy after marriage with the family’s chosen groom for her. She doesn’t want to defy their right to choose a groom for her, yet she breaks her own moral barriers with premarital sex, justifying this

as her right to a free life before settling down. Tanya represents a character who is free spirited yet doesn't want to challenge the family and societal values, not directly at any rate.

From the 1980s onwards, women have been portrayed with their own perception of life. "Recent writers depict both the diversity of women and the diversity within each woman, rather than limiting the lives of women to one ideal. The novels emerging in the twenty-first century furnish examples of a whole range of attitudes towards the imposition of tradition, some offering an analysis of the family structure and the caste system as the key elements of patriarchal social organization... the work of Indian women writers is significant in making society aware of women's demands, and in providing a medium for self-expression and, thus, re-writing the History of India." ("*Women Empowerment In Indian English Novels English Literature Essay*," November 2013). To break away from the imposition of the patriarchal society, female subjectivity was explored for establishing a self-contained identity of Indian women. The novels began to portray Indian women with social and psychological realism. "This movement, from the outward gross realities to inward complexities, found as its mouth-piece, a number of women novelists who, by the peculiar situation of their existence, have been able to see the Indian complexities from close quarters, where constraints of varied hues and shades work upon the sensitive individuals.(p.2)"(Shukla). The struggle to find an identity of one's own was explored by writers like Nayantara Sahgal whose '*Rich Like Us*' (Sahgal, 1986/2000) is based on a similar theme. A different take on the same subject is by Githa Hariharan in her novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* (Hariharan, 978-0-7043-4465-5/1992) where the western educated female protagonist is in quest for her cultural roots. Just as Sita in *The Thousand Faces of Night* (Hariharan, 978-0-7043-4465-5/1992) has to come to terms with an old dream of her own as she

arranges her daughter's marriage, Zubeida in *'The Price of Our Silence'* finally accepts her own dreams and desires when she is faced with challenges of her own arranged marriage and career choices. Zubeida can be compared to a hybrid of the anchor rock Sita and her intellectual daughter, Devi- the characters in their own individual sense bringing alive the underworld of Indian women's lives. Zubeida refuses to end up like Jaya from Shashi Deshpande's, *"That Long Silence"*(Deshpande, 1989). Jaya, who is a housewife and a mother of two teenaged children, along with being a writer in her free time, resembles a typical Indian housewife who compromises for her family needs, putting family before oneself, suffering silently restricted by the society. Jaya's wish of becoming a free spirited writer with no restrictions and duties binding her down is fulfilled by Zubeida in *'The Price of Our Silence'*. Yet Zubeida doesn't abandon her traditional familial and community relationships in pursuit of her dreams. She becomes the modern Indian girl who, in the words of Superle (2011), "is a savior: in emancipating herself and others and pursuing gender equality, she transforms herself and her community, ultimately providing a valuable contribution to postcolonial India by creating an empowered balance between tradition and modernity." (p.57) (Superle, Routledge NY/2011).

In the history of Indian novels written in English, feminism has further grown from R.P.Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal and Anita Desai to pave way for Shobha De, Bharati Mukherjee, Anees Jung, Shashi Deshpande, Raji Narsimhan, and others. These newer female voices have shown the same predilection for nostalgia, introspection, autobiography and subjectivity presenting the typical Indian feminine sensibility and emotional aesthetic propensities. Interior monologue and stream of consciousness is often used to highlight the interior landscape of the emancipated woman's sensibility and her psychological pragmatism

as quite often done in *'The Price of Our Silence'*. A clear example of this technique is the scene when Zubeida is made to talk to Samad, the prospective groom. Her inner musings are completely in contrast to the actual answers she gives in response to his queries. Being a third person subjective, multiple viewpoints novel, *'The Price of Our Silence'* intends to encapsulate a certain section of modern Indian youths' life without aiming to sound too grim. Hence the balancing act of handling the serious issues along with a light romance at the front. Since its inception in 1864, "Indian novel in English has faithfully recorded the challenges and confrontation of values and the process of transition and transformation going on in the Indian society." (*Women Empowerment In Indian English Novels English Literature Essay*, "November 2013). With the intention of doing the same, *'The Price of Our Silence'* will carve its own space in this vast body of Modern IENs, and contribute a fresh perspective on the lives of three ordinary young friends in contemporary India.

### ***Section 3: Conclusion***

*'The Price of Our Silence'* is a contribution to the Indian Literature in English, marked by a distinctive Indian feel for the English language, and an authentic presentation of contemporary India, with some of its regional variations, focusing on the women of a typical Indian society. It is an attempt to use light humour, simple language, and uncomplicated structure, while addressing some serious issues and struggles faced by modern Indian youth. Ranging from simple struggles of youthful attraction and jealousy to more serious ones like abortion, marriage and career choices, from the joy of the first kiss to the shock of fatal illness, from silly pranks

and antics to serious life changing steps of life, *'The Price of Our Silence'* is a rollercoaster ride spanning over one year of the lives of three best friends as they go about dealing with the new surprises that life throws their way.

The potential audience for my creative work is mainly Indians worldwide looking to indulge in a reflection of India. It includes the expats who might be nostalgic for their motherland or who wish to 'catch up' with what has become of Indian society since they left. Youth can sympathize and relate to the experiences of the three friends while the older generation can muse over the problems faced by the youth in a race for keeping themselves up to date. With the intention of reaching out to the young audience *'The Price of Our Silence'* balances a love story along with depicting the serious topic of the increasing capitalist nature of the contemporary Indian society. The drawback of this approach is that the romance might put off a certain section of the readers who are not particularly fond of this genre. I aim for a global acceptance of the novel because I believe that the world is curious to know the face behind "one of the fastest growing economy in the world" (p.16) (Tripathy, 2009). The Hindi words used in the novel might prove to be a hindrance in the easy flow of the narrative for international readers, however, with the backup of strong evidence of global acceptance of Indian writing in English mentioned earlier in the exegesis, my intention for *'The Price of Our Silence'* is that it will cross cultural barriers and reach out to the growing readership across the world, managing to contribute to the existing body of Modern IEN.

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