I. **Introduction** :-

The present thesis is a modest attempt to explore contemporary socio-political realistic delineation in the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee and Vikram Seth. Both novelists are contemporary and excel in depicting social, political, sexual aspects of contemporary India. Gender discrimination, corrupt administration and bureaucracy are other aspects of these novelists. Upamanyu Chatterjee has presented modern India where drugs, women and literature corrupt youths. He has given the vivid account of real India, the life in an Indian family at the end of twentieth century, etc. Dr. Mukul Dikshit rightly thinks:

*Chatterjee has, for the first time, focused on, “new class” of westernized urban Indians that was hither to ignored in the regional as well as English fiction of India.* (http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/upamanyu_chatterjee)

Vikram Seth is another Indian English novelist who migrates to abroad and writes on India and her socio-political life. His novels satirically and earnestly examine the issue of national politics, the discrimination of caste and class, academic affairs and intra-family relations. Khushwant Singh rightly remarks about his novels, “I lived through that period and I couldn’t find a flaw. It really is an authentic picture of Nehru’s Indian.” (Vikram Seth, Doon online: Features and spotlights, retrieved 2007-09-05.) Most critics have praised Vikram Seth for providing an in-depth treatment of Indian culture.

The novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee and Vikram Seth have dealt with themes related to the present social scenario, in an effort to bring about social change, and a social cultural revolution to make the people aware of the need to revamp the present social structure and where in a renewed and better social system. Upamanyu Chatterjee has been hailed as India’s George
Bernard Shaw. Vikram Seth is more concerned with using art to assess the world around him and to influence it. He grapples directly with the social conditions and political events of modern India. Thus both Vikram Seth and Upamanyu Chatterjee are concerned with the contemporary socio-political aspects of India and their novels bear the testimony of this.

The present research work is an attempt to analyze the connection between the literary species and its social and political context with special reference to Upamanyu Chatterjee and Vikram Seth.

1.2 Literature and Society:

Being literature is the mirror of society, it presents the contemporary socio-political and culture. In the same way a particular text written in particular period helps us to understand that particular society. The beginning of Indian English literature is an outcome of socio-political development. The genre of the novel represents the social situation to a large extent. Close-reading of text may amuse the reader but it certainly keeps him or her away from the social and political / cultural situations of the text in which it is produced.

_The relation between the society and the author is reciprocal in nature. The authors are not mechanically determined by ideology, class or economic condition. Rather as Edward Said believes, the authors are “in the history of their societies, shaping and shaped by that history and their experience in different measure.”_ (Said Edward, _Culture and Imperialism_, London: Vintage, 1994, p.XXIV)

A literary man is as much a product of his society as his art is product of his own reaction to life. The time-spirit is the total outcome, the quintessential accretion of all the political, social, religious, and scientific changes of a particular age. The historical aspect of literature, therefore,
minor or unimportant though it may be for aesthetic purpose, cannot be totally ignored.

According to Hudson:

*A nation’s life has its mood of exultation and depression; its epochs a strong faith and strenuous idealism, now of doubt, struggle and disillusion, now of ........ will vary greatly with the individuality of each writer......... directly or indirectly reveal itself in his work.* (Hudson, *The Purple Land*, London: Sampson Low, 1885, p.64.)

Every man, according to Goethe’s statement, is the citizen of his age as well as of his country. Renan remarked: “*One belongs to one’s century and race, even when one reacts against one’s century race.*” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_Renan#Definitionof_Nationhood) If a work of literature is to be judged by the quality of this reflection, it is apparent that it depends on quality and nature of the reflecting mind. Literature studied as a reflection of the spirit of the age creates a new spirit for us. With its help, we travel into the minds of the other races and minds of the other epochs. Thus it belongs to a sort of sociological approach, a supplementary and commentary on history. Once we are steeped in the spirit of a by-gone age, we are able to enjoy even archaic books which otherwise would not appeal to us.

The function of literature is different from that of history; Literature is the revelation of beauty. Beauty is the expression of emotion and all such expression without any exception is beautiful.

Literature is a social phenomenon, using as its medium, language, social creation. Such traditional literacy devices as symbolism and meter are social in their very nature. They are conventions and norms which could have arisen only in society. Literature imitates life; and is, in
large measure, a social reality. The poet or the novelist is himself is the member of society. He possesses a specific social status. Literature and society are interwoven internally and externally.

1.3 Literature and Sex:

Sex and sexual relations plays a vital role in the family institution and ultimately in the society to form someone’s identity, status and recognition. Sexual Relationship is vital aspect of Indian Society that leads to create a society. It has a prominent place in Indian Society. Indian concept of sex is different from the Western context. In Christianity sexual relationship is considered as a sin and crime whereas in India it is inseparable part of life that fabricates the social and political stance of the society. The word ‘sex’ connotes very strange, strong and acidic reactions among Indian people and they are unable to discuss it and most even deny it. Due to the lack of adequate education and formal and informal training in this vital field, sex is conditioned and restrained.

In modern India sex is considered as a hidden, occult, phenomenon. It is something to be ashamed of. Michel Foucault in his history of sexuality attacked this concept of sex as Victorian repressive hypothesis. Sex is considered as something sin, crime and never to be talked in public. However the western Christian societies have attempted to free themselves by open discussion of such subjects in last few decades thus making it an issue as almost part of formal education. The Indian sexuality remains a taboo and we need to overcome this stupid notion that discussing sex is unhealthy and unholy. The contemporary Indian society has become rigid and more orthodox in sexual relationship than an ancient Indian society. The number of Indian English novelists starts to write and talk of sex, sensuality in their respective works. The writers like Upamanyu Chatterjee and Vikram Seth have presented love, marriage and sex in their works. The following
1.4 Literature and Politics:

Literature and politics are the two aspects of human experience. Literature represents one of the highest forms of development of aesthetic sensibility of a society whereas politics is at the nucleus. Someone rightly quoted that there is nothing politics, itself is politics. And nearly all the events-social, economical, religious etc revolves around politics. Hence we cannot separate politics from literature. Literature is written to convey message to society. It is a mirror of society. Literature is shaped and molded by the society and even society is also influenced by the life style and human values presented in literature. Hence we cannot separate literature from society. Literature is therefore a deliberate act of social communication. As a member of society and of certain class, the author is conditioned by the historical and politico-economics circumstances of his times. Therefore events in the society are the source for writing a piece of literature.

The depiction of the socio-political facts- the reality of the times enables a writer to leave indelible impressions on the psyche of not only provided readers but the entire society as well. A writer must content with and reflect the reality in his writing. Reality refers to, the knowledge of life’s development in general to its concrete phenomena at a given time in particular. Knowledge of life is the main source from which a work of literature draws its strength and its writer his power of conviction. A writer also captures historically relatives understanding of the truth of the particular period in which a text takes its birth. In order to reflect this reality in his works, a writer, therefore captures the essential features of the
epoch’s great events – their strength as well as weakness. Tolstoy, for instance, is great because of the ‘depth and impressiveness with which the epoch is described’ (Alfred and Kniff, Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature, New York, 1974, p.20.) and ‘the truthfulness with which he rendered the contradictions and the ruthless breaking up of the old established order that took place in post reform Russia’ (Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature, New York, 1974, p.23.). The portrayal of reality, in other words, involves highlighting the important problems of the people and new aspects of life.

A writer uses certain events from the history, gives order to them and adds something of his own imagination according to the law of probability and necessity and creates something permanent and universal. In this way a writer creates a world of his own, a world in which through the creation of individual characters- imaginary or real, or both he investigates the social being of man and the role of certain sections of society in history, the conflicts of their interests and the nature of their clashes and cleavages. It is through the study of these characters that a writer gives an idea of mentality of the people, their moral attitudes, their ideals and aspirations.

An attitude towards reality and its role in creation of literature leads to positions of subjectivism which stem from a thinking that art is basically irrational and that ideological, political and social questions are foreign to its nature. It is, above all, the expression of an artist’s isolated subjective impressions, no matter whether they correspond to the real image of the objective world or not. This is primarily done to assert the seeming independence.

Every writer is a writer in politics. The only question is what and whose politics. A writer promotes socio-political good by basing his work on contemporary situations. The great literature expresses complex and valuable social ideas with powerful artistic simplicity.
In Indian English literature, politics has always been of paramount significance. The ideology of the author, the writer’s attitude to contemporary situation - is an integral part of the relationship between literature and politics. In Indian English literature, the question of ideological stand-point of the writer became prominent in the context of the various freedom struggles and it continues to remain relevant in the post-independence period as well as the contemporary Indian writers writing in English are preoccupied with the mean, corrupt and helpless politics of their times. It is within this broad-based framework of relationship between literature and politics and literature and society rather than any specific theory of literature that present research attempts to evaluate the major writings of Upamanyu Chatterjee and Vikram Seth.

However it is appropriate to study the evolution and development of Indian English fiction as a genre on the Indian soil and the reflection of socio-political situations in Indian English fiction.
Partha Chatterjee is a political theorist and historian. He studied at Presidency College in Calcutta, and received his Ph.D. from the University of Rochester. He divides his time between Columbia University and the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, where he was the Director from 1997 to 2007. He is the author of more than twenty books, monographs and edited volumes and is a founding faculty member of the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta. Scholars such as Ranajit Guha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gyanendra Pandey and others, present the minority histories in an oppositional mode to express the struggle for inclusion and representation. In the same vein, but with a different angle, the social historian Fred Dallmayr argues that analysts need a serious rethinking of such basic philosophical categories as difference in order to engage in a genuine process of dialogical learning (Dallmayr 1996). The subaltern model of the encounter of cultures is in common with H. G. Gadamer's theory of the hermeneutic experience, which is based on the thesis that there exists an experience of truth outside the reality of science (Rorty 1991). Vikram Seth is an Indian novelist, poet, and travel writer, best known for his epic novel A Suitable Boy. It is one of the longest novels ever written in the English language and deals with the national political issues in the period leading up to the first post-Independence national election of India in 1952. Recommended Lists: Recommended Lists