

**SPATIAL POLITICS OF DOMINANCE AND
APPROPRIATION IN *KARACHI VICE* BY
SAMIRA SHACKLE AND *A FINE BALANCE* BY
ROHINTON MISTRY**

BY

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**Spatial Politics of Dominance and Appropriation In *Karachi Vice*
By Samira Shackle and *A Fine Balance* By Rohinton Mistry**

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Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Spatial Politics of Dominance And Appropriation In Karachi Vice By Samira Shackle And A Fine Balance By Rohinton Mistry** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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ABSTRACT

Title: Spatial Politics of Dominance and Appropriation in *Karachi Vice* By Samira Shackle and *A Fine Balance* By Rohinton Mistry

This thesis explores production of space, spatial politics of dominance and appropriation and its implications on power structures and spatial discourses about modern city in the novels *Karachi vice: Life and Death in a Contested City* (2021) by Samira shackle and *A Fine Balance* (1995) by Rohinton Mistry. The thesis uses the *Spatial Triad* by Henry Lefebvre as theoretical lens to study production of space through social processes of informality and violence and further triangulates it with de Certeau's concept of *Strategy and Tactics* and Chattopadhyay's *Unlearning the City* to study the implications of this spatial production on power structures and dominant spatial discourses on modern city. This thesis attempts to problematize Lefebvre's romantic envisioning of the revolutionary potential of subversive actions of the urban poor in producing informal spaces. The study acknowledges Lefebvre's take on state's complicity in producing abstract space, but it also sheds a sceptical light on an anarchist ideal of Lefebvre and suggests to struggle in the direction of a welfare state. The study is significant as it contributes to the spatial turn in humanities recognising the social and political nature of space and its implications for power dynamics within contemporary fiction. The research, being qualitative in nature, uses textual analysis as a research method, to delve deeply into the research questions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM	ii
AUTHOR’S DECLARATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
DEDICATION.....	viii
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1:1 Background of the study.....	2
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	7
1.3 Research Questions.....	7
1.4 Research Methodology.....	7
1.5 Significance of the Study.....	8
1.6 Delimitation of the Study.....	9
1. 7 Organization of Study.....	9
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	10
2:1 Literature Review of City Literature.....	10
2:2 Literature Review of Slum Literature.....	12
2:3 Literature Review of Primary Texts.....	14
2:3:1 <i>Karachi Vice</i>	14
2:3:2 <i>A Fine Balance</i>	16
2:4 Literature Review of Theoretical Framework.....	19
2:4:1 Conclusion.....	23
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	25
3:1 Lefebvre’s Spatial Triad.....	26
3:1:1 Abstract Space.....	28
3:1:2 Differential Space.....	29
3:2 de Certeau’s Concepts of Tactics and Strategy.....	29
3:3 Unlearning the City.....	30

4. PRODUCTION AND POLITICS OF INFORMAL SPACES IN KARACHI VICE	
BY SAMIRA SHACKLE.....	33
4:1 Introduction and Brief Summary of Karachi Vice	33
4:1:1 Brief Summary of <i>Karachi Vice</i>	33
4:2 Writing the Everyday in <i>Karachi Vice</i>	34
4:3 Spatial Production and Politics in Informal Spaces in <i>Karachi Vice</i>	36
4:3:1 Abstract Space and the State Responsibility.....	38
4:3:2 Spatial politics and Forced Evictions in <i>Karachi Vice</i>	39
4:4 Political Potential of Informal Practices in <i>Karachi Vice</i>	40
4:5 Unlearning the City in <i>Karachi Vice</i>	50
4:6 Conclusion.....	52
5. SPATIAL PRODUCTION AND POLITICS IN A FINE BALANCE.....	53
5:1 Introduction and Brief Summary	53
5:2 Spatial Production and Politics in <i>A Fine Balance</i>	53
5:3 Agency vs Survivalism	54
5:3:1 Agential power threatened by State.....	55
5:3:2 Bourgeoisisation of Law.....	56
5:4 Unlearning of City in <i>A Fine Balance</i>	59
5:5 Conclusion	61
6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	63
6:1 Conclusion.....	63
6:2 Recommendations.....	65
WORKS CITED.....	67

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband and my parents for their love, endless support and encouragement.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The primary texts, chosen for textual analysis in this thesis, can be situated in the broader category of city literature, a genre of literature which depicts the culture, people and happenings of a city. Though this is not a strictly separate genre, yet it can be said that the novels where the urban spatiality plays an integral part in the shaping of narrative can be aptly placed in this category. The works under consideration in this thesis take a closer look at the everyday lives of common people and the way they negotiate urban space in the context of local political upheavals. *Karachi Vice: Life and Death in a Contested City* (2021) is a debut work by Samira Shackle. Samira Shackle is a British journalist who regularly contributes to guardian and frequently visits Karachi where her family lives. The second novel, *A Fine Balance* (1995) by Rohinton Mistry is set in Mumbai, at the time when emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi's government was in full throttle. Rohinton Mistry is a Canada based Indian writer and belongs to a parsi family. His famous works include three novels *Long journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1995), *Family Matters* (2002) and a collection of short stories *Tales from Frozesh Baag* (1987), all of these works have been nominated for the Booker prize. Both these works zoom in on the slums or underbelly of the largest modern South Asian cities, where city spaces are being continuously contested between different groups and stakeholders of the city. Although one work is **journalistic non-fiction** also called literary journalism (it follows narrative techniques and stylistic strategies traditionally associated with fiction) and the other one is a fictional account, but both are narrative in nature and are written with a higher purpose of telling the stories of those living at city margins. The **rationale** of bringing together these two novels is that they depict urban spaces produced and appropriated by weaker agents of the society through informal practices having implications for power structures and dominant spatial discourses of the modern city. These appropriative practices by the weak agents of society have the potential to produce urban spaces. These practices though are subversive in nature but are not revolutionary as claimed by Lefebvre. On the contrary they have the potential to strengthen and sustain the system, as these practices are often a result of adaptive measures and survivalist instincts. However, they do invite to transform the way we learn about cities through dominant discourses on modern city.

This thesis explores the production of urban space through social processes of informal uses of space, violence and the political nature of this spatial production. These processes give rise to certain spatial practices which produce urban space and are embedded in the politically contested nature of space. Through these spatial practices the weak asserts agential capacity in face of dominant structures of power. The thesis will interpret these practices and their implications in the light of Lefebvre's *Spatial Triad* complemented by de Certeau's concept of *Strategy and Tactics* and Chattopadhyay's concept of *Unlearning the City*.

1:1 Background of the Study

The theoretical frameworks, which this thesis employ can be read in the broader context of emergence of *spatial turn* in humanities. The rise to prominence of spatial perspective instead of time or historicity in humanities and social sciences is often called the spatial turn. Historically, in scholarship there was an ontological and epistemological predominance of time over space and the spatial turn was a response to this predominance (Soja 140). In the intellectual realm "historicism", a despatialized view of human society was a manifestation of this trend where geography was subordinated to history. Edward Soja believed that a shift was needed to contextualize social life not just in history but also geography .

The emergence of spatial thinking over a span of several decades has introduced a spatial outlook to various studies concerning humanities. The spatial approach has become transdisciplinary infiltrating all aspects of academic investigations. This new exploration is opening up new possibilities and insight in a wide variety of subject areas. Social issues like justice, difference, inequality, religion, community, crime, identity, memories etc. are being studied in spatial terms.

It took centuries to reinsert and reassert space in the workings of modern consciousness (Soja 139). It was Chicago School of Sociologists and geographers who made an attempt to introduce the spatial concept in urban analysis. This project looked into the experiences of immigrants and textures of ethnic neighbourhoods but the project doomed because of its superficial and reductive understanding of class, gender, power and the world system. Howsoever crude their findings or generalisations were, they were the first glimpses of what was to become an important and separate discipline. In generical terms they saw the city as, " the manifestation of human nature and spatially generated social relations"(Janowitz 2).

It was the tumultuous 1960s Parisian revolution which gave impetus to new ideas about interplay of space and society, reversing a hundred year dominance of historicist hegemony, privileging historical and social theoretical discourses. Guy Debord, a revolutionary, launched a movement in 1950s and 1960 known by the name of The Situationists. Their journal *The Situationist International* published seditious and inflammatory articles and provoked people to become part of this movement. The movement evoked a utopian vision of a city where it is not a site and object of consumerism and profit but of play and performance. They viewed the urban space as user's space rather than a site and a product of consumption. Urban crisis of the 1960s forced urban sociologists to rethink their perspectives (Zukin 577).

Soja associates the two towering scholars Henry Lefebvre and Michel Foucault to spatial turn (Soja 35). These were the first stirrings of what later came to be called the spatial turn. Both stressed on the ontological parity of space and time (and body) in being constitutive of each other at the existential level. Foucault in his lecture notes "Of Other Places" disputes the interpretation of time as mobile, dynamic, progressive, dialectic, process while space as unchanging, sterile, apolitical, background, the stage or container of social process and history(1).

Both these thinkers also give prominence to the **importance of human body** in connections between power and space. While Foucault focuses on how the power regimes employ space in order to assert and cement their control over societies (biopower) and see space as architectural code of circumscribing the human body. In contrast Lefebvre views space as product of human body and thus having the capacity to empower and liberate it and not just an externally confining force (Stewart 2). This corporeal production of space gives way to ideas of resistance through human body by appropriating spaces by them, thus creating lived spaces by seeking to appropriate them through spatial practices (Stewart 2).

Both these thinkers were sceptical towards spatial approaches and ways of thinking prevalent at the time, which in their opinion were not sufficient to challenge the supremacy of historical approach. Their theorisations endeavoured to fill this gap and embrace the complexities of spatial aspects. They built upon existing concepts adding onto them their own original contributions. Just like the unitary conception of time, energy and matter in physics, it was time to bring together sociological, historical and the geographical (Soja 36).

Henry Lefebvre (1901-1991), born in France, was a leading Marxist sociologist, who in the wake of events of 1968, responded with works on everyday life and production of space from the vantage point of Marxism or historical materialism. Earlier space was treated as an abstract concept having no real relevance but later on a shift occurred realising its importance in power politics, control and contestation. Physical spaces in the form of architecture and built environment were discursively created reflecting certain ideas of those holding power (West-Pavlov 112). The 1968 uprising by the students involved the occupation of key symbolic sites in Paris. Lefebvre's reaction to the events of May 1968 reflects his ideas about the liberating potential of space depending upon how it is used in human practice. If spaces are produced to negatively impact human society, to control it, the same (the unjust and oppressive geographies) can be changed to change the society.

In his book *Production of Space* (1974) Lefebvre conceptualizes the space as a social product and avoids the concept of space in absolute terms, having essential character independent of forces external to it. He combines the mental, physical and social aspects of its creation. Space according to him is a result of our conceptualization of space, called the conceived space (the dominant space of planners, architects, state etc), the perceived space, which is the physical manifestation of space and the lived space which is the space created by the inhabitants through their everyday practices, also called the dominated space. This theorization of production of space is also known as *The Spatial Triad*.

According to this vision, architecture is not just a physical structure on land but is an expression of dominant powers and ideas of space in that society (Lefebvre 38). Lefebvre sees a conflict between this conceptualization of the space (the conceived space) and the way this space is used by inhabitants (lived space). As a Marxist he calls this a conflict between exchange value and use value of urban space, as capitalism is the dominant discourse in the conceptualization of our modern cities. In this mode of urbanism, the space is commodified and exchange value takes precedence over use value. He uses the terms of "dominance" and "appropriation" in the spatial triad to designate this conflict between conceived space (by the state, architects, planners, capitalist economy) and the lived space (the space created through spatial practices of inhabitants and the appropriation of which is sought by imagination).

Connected to the processes of dominance and appropriation are two more concepts, which make a major part of discussions and theorisations in his work *The*

Production of Space (1974). When space is conceived by planners and the state following a capitalist logic, that is to underpin capital accumulation and growth, Lefebvre calls it an **abstract space**. This is a space of commodification and which is itself commodified, and is oriented towards exchange value and homogenisation. It is a dominant space as it gets concretized through spatial practices of global economic structures, state and law.

In contrast the lived spaces appropriated by the inhabitants are heterogeneous, diverse, and spontaneous and are oriented towards use value. These are spaces which are embedded and contingent on history and society and emerge out of needs, goals, imagination and desire of people. Lefebvre romanticizes these spaces as spaces of resistance, defiance, freedom and difference, calling these **differential** spaces. However, the concept is ridden with ambivalence in his writings. On one hand it is a post-revolutionary space where differential and disalienated space of everyday life will gain predominance over the abstract space. Also he tends to idealise the pre-revolutionary appropriated space especially by the marginalised sections of society, like Favelas of Brazil or the temporary spatial occupations by students and citizens in 1970s situationists movements of Paris. The appropriations of spaces by Egyptians around Al Tahrir square can also be cited as an example as it attempted to challenge the established order.

Lefebvre, in the tradition of Avant-gardes and the Situationists saw the potential of revolution in these appropriations. This thesis attempts to **problematize** this romantic notion of Lefebvre by making it articulate with de Certeau's concept of *Strategy and Tactics* (1980). De Certeau was sceptical about the revolutionary potential of such practices. According to him though tactics can be subversive in nature but they don't lead to leaping outside of the system. This thesis, though takes a stance that these appropriative and tactical practices do fray and extend the urban space, they don't have the revolutionary potential to change the dominant systems as claimed by Lefebvre. As these practices are often a result of adaptation and survivalist instinct, they have a tendency to strengthen the system.

The thesis also inquires into the implications of these Spatial practices on the dominant discourse about the concept of a modern city aided by concepts of Swati Chattopadhyay as mentioned in her work *Unlearning the City* (2012). The investigation will zoom in on the everyday spatial practices of inhabitants to scrutinize the political contestations of space as site of power struggles and the processual making and remaking of a city. The possibility to subvert the dominant space is latent in the complexities of

everyday life, simultaneously providing the inhabitants with creative agency to mould and re-read the space according to their needs and aspirations.

This production of space by users of space through their usage and activities in space, keeps on changing the lived experience of the city. Chattopadhyay in her work *Unlearning the City* exhorts to see the city space in a new optical field, and keep on redefining it as it gets transformed because of the way it is used and lived. Specifically we need to unlearn the knowledge that comes from the dominant institutions or discourses about the city. Thus by making Lefebvre's concepts converse with other two frameworks one will be able to investigate the implications of appropriative practices on the dominant systems governing the urban spaces and the dominant discourse on the modern city.

The texts this thesis attempts to analyse are an intimate account of the everyday lives of common people and the way they negotiate urban space in the context of global and local political upheavals. *Karachi Vice: Life and Death in a Contested City (2021)* is a debut work by Samira Shackle. In this text she narrativises the everyday lives of residents of Liari and Korangi, battling poverty, government neglect, political apathy and gang violence. In doing so they produce the urban space through informal practices such as street schools, playing in the street, street theatre, squatting, street vending etc. to survive and adapt to the urban reality they find themselves in. Similarly, violence in this text creates new configurations of space like no go areas, surveillance spaces and gated communities. It forces the dwellers to reconsider the way they have been earlier engaging with their neighbourhood. Through everyday spatial practices they attempt to subvert and survive through power struggles and power imbalances. In doing so the dwellers re-imagine the city and rearticulate new patterns of living the city (Urbano 159) and create new contexts of meaning. The city thus emerges at once as product as well as a process undergoing constant change. The city is always in constant state of being and becoming.

The second novel *A Fine Balance (1995)* is a novel set in Mumbai, written by Rohinton Mistry. In this novel the narrator takes into account the everyday lives of under classes who strive for basic amenities of life and a place for residence and livelihood in the midst of drive for beautification of the city during the emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi's regime. The characters resort to informal practices of homemaking and livelihood, creating a typical urban scape of large South Asian metropolis where shantytowns or slums exist side by side modern infrastructure and gated housing schemes. The drive for the so called 'beautification' of the city leads to the demolitions of these makeshift spaces created by the poor of the city who then wander from place to

place to find food, shelter and livelihood. The novel's tragic end points towards the failure of modern capitalistic organization of our postcolonial cities where the struggle for space seems to be a never ending phenomenon for the downtrodden.

1:2 Thesis Statement

The spatial politics of dominance and appropriation between the weak and the strong stakeholders of the city seem to operate in Samira Shackle 's text *Karachi Vice:Life and Death in a Contested City (2021)* and *A Fine Balance (1995)* by Rohinton Mistry. It is argued that in these instances the spatial production resulting from appropriative practices by the weak agents of society do fray and extend the urban space, but does not have the revolutionary potential to dismantle the dominant system. In this thesis an attempt is made to bring *Lefebvre's spatial triad* in articulation with *de Certeau's tactics and strategy* to substantiate this argument by problematizing the Lefebvre's spatial concepts and further extend the debate by incorporating Chattopadhyas's idea of *unlearning the city*.

1:3 Research Questions

1: In what ways do the spatial appropriation practices impact the modern city discourse?

2: How does Lefebvre's spatial triad explain urban spatial production in the selected texts?

3: How does the spatial politics of dominance and appropriation operate in the texts *Karachi Vice (2021)* by Samira Shackle and *A Fine Balance(1995)* by Rohinton Mistry?

1:4 Research Methodology

This research, being qualitative in its nature, uses textual analysis to delve deeply into the research questions. The process is often interdisciplinary as it interprets the work in light of various aspects of human culture ranging from science to ideological beliefs. This method of analysis contextualises the text in matters external to it that is the cultural and historical background in which it is written. It goes beyond the structure of the text not to find one truth or one correct meaning of the text but instead remains open to many possible interpretations. According to Catherine Belsey the method of textual analysis is essential to cultural study of or finding culture in texts and other cultural products. It is a formal method of analysis which essentially includes asking questions about the texts and setting objects of the study. Belsey further explains textual analysis

“as a research method which closely study the text avoiding too much of presumptions about it” (Belsey 4).

Along with the emphasis on the text, this method gives equal importance to extra textual knowledge. Interpretive study in this scenario is incomplete without this knowledge. Thus it can be implied that although it is similar to close reading method in having primary focus on the text however it also differs from it as it depends on knowledge outside the texts to meet its objectives. This knowledge can be derived from secondary sources like books, articles, interviews, journals, personal anecdotes, lectures etc.

For the purpose of textual analysis I have closely read the text and have attended to textual details by drawing on certain theoretical frameworks and critical perspectives in order to explore specific questions. Moreover, I have developed my argument in support of my thesis statement by interpreting selected quotes from the texts in the light of selected frameworks, secondary sources and my own analysis.

1:5 Significance of the study

The spatial perspective in humanities have become all the more important with increasing urbanisation .The postmodern approach towards the space as a social product has politicised its character, making it imperative to study the political/power struggles in the context of urban space. Lefebvre sees space as a tool for the exercise of power and deems it necessary to know how it is produced in order to challenge this power. This study is significant as it contributes to this important aspect of spatial turn, diagnosing the implications of these struggles over space on power structures, exploring inherent potentials and contradictions in spatial subversions. Spaces are an important delineation in the selected texts and so far their political dimension has not been studied. This thesis makes an attempt to extend and intervene in Lefebvre’s spatial triad by making it articulate with other theoretical approaches. Furthermore, the significance of this study also lies in the fact that the selected texts have hardly been made subject of scholarly inquiry through the critical stance that I have taken. I have attempted to study and analyse the impact of informal appropriations of space by the urban poor and their impact on established order, the condition of the poor and the spatial discourse. These dimensions were hitherto absent in scholarship available on the selected texts.

1:6 Delimitation

The scope of this study is limited to the data two novels i.e. *Karachi Vice ;Life and Death in a Contested City (2021)* by Samira Shackle and *A Fine Balance (1995)* by Rohinton Mistry. Within these novels I only investigate informal practices and violence . This inquiry is limited to know the role played by these social processes in the production of space, the spatial politics/power struggles involved in this production of space and the need to reinvent and reimagine these spaces in dominant connotations and conceptualizations of a modern city. This study limits itself to the use of *the Spatial Triad* by Henry Lefebvre , De Certeau's *Strategy and Tactics* and Chattopadhyay' s *Unlearning the City* as theoretical lens.

1:7 Chapter Breakdown

The major body of the paper comprises five chapters.

1. The Introduction, chapter 1, introduces the texts and theoretical framework. It also specifies the questions asked for the purpose of this study and the areas this study has limited itself to. It will also include the specific research methodology to be deployed for this study.
2. Literature Review is part of chapter 2. It situates my study to the specific genre of literature .It also surveys the work which has already been done regarding the selected text. This survey is essential to identify the gap in existing scholarship surrounding the literary texts selected for this thesis.
3. Chapter 3 includes the introduction and an explanation of theoretical frameworks and definitions of different terminologies which are part of these frameworks
4. Chapter 4 of this study includes the Analysis of the study. In this section an attempt will be made to interpret the text keeping in mind the theoretical frameworks and the research questions given in the synopsis.
5. Lastly, chapter 5 consists of conclusion of this study in the light of research questions. Some recommendations will also be part of this section for the future course of this research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2:1 City Literature

The novels this study attempts to investigate can be situated in the broader category of *City Literature*. The city as represented in the literature is a reflection of changing urban realities and it also influences these changes. This representation dates back to the myth laden ancient cities to the realist depictions of the contemporary cities (McNAMARA 1).

Epic, myth, drama like Homer's *Iliad* or Virgil's *Aeneid* are inseparable from the collective culture and identity of cities like Troy as a great symbolic city in the Roman culture. Cities according to McNamara as a totality has three principal manifestations. First as symbolic cities which stand for ideals, second the realist depiction of cities and third the cities which are imagined in speculative ways to create different moods like horror, distress and fear, like gothic and dystopian cities etc (47).

About symbolic cities Susan Stephens argues that ancient cities are more than historical cities. Famous and ancient cities of Europe represent certain kinds of relationships between the city and its citizens. Athens and Rome are emblematic of democracy and dictatorial civic orders. Alexandria as a city of many cultures and Jerusalem as the archetypal diasporic city has been depicted in literature not just as cities but also what they stand for (31). Karen Newman as she explores the representation of ancient and contemporary capitals of Europe in literature highlights the significance of symbolic cities (42).

The second form of manifestation of city in literature, according to McNamara is the way they are represented in realist novels. Such literary texts map the social, economic, and cultural geographies (47). Alison O'Brien observes and traces this literary tradition to the early criticisms of early modern London's urban culture, which emerged as satires on the confusion, deception and pretence of this culture. From this period onwards, literature extensively depicted the real cities and the life patterns which they effected (57). The built environment and its reshaping is a physical manifestation of new patterns of social growth, profit oriented activities and modes of surveillance and social control. The social, political and economic processes tend to reshape the landscapes which in turn influence collective behaviour. (58).

Realist fiction provides intimate knowledge of the urban life and is even considered a part documentary record of urban thought throughout history. Stuart Culver examines that how social sciences or humanities can be linked to the study of novels with realist depictions of life. In his discussion he selects texts which not only exemplify theories but go beyond them to show their limitations to order the chaos of everyday life and its faithful representation (85).

Representation of poverty in cities with a reformist mindset has also been an important undertaking on the part of writers. Bart Keunen and Luc De Droogh in their discussion of urban economic outsiders and their depictions in literature divide the themes of these works into different categories like romantic underdogs, the issues of morality, conflicting social interests and the alienation of the individual. They also examine the narratives where these outsiders are spatially pushed to city margins, the outskirts of the city accentuating the accumulative impact of the grotesque realism. These narratives invoke different affective responses and leads to different explorations of truths about the city and the fate of the poor in these cities (99).

Seth Greabner writes about representation of colonial cities, which are all about patterns of dominance and submission, from its social relations to its built environment and its inhabitant's freedom of movement. He identifies differences of values and collective beliefs and behaviours in the spatial dynamics of the native and settler quarters (188). Post-independence, as Greabner observes that the indicators of separation and segregation between these quarters still exist and are in no sight of disappearing anytime soon. The post-colonial city appears as complex fractured and ruptured in the historiographical fiction, as it attempts to depict the suppressed narratives and erased tales from the official history (189).

Azed Seyhan brings our attention towards the literature by the postcolonial immigrants, refugees and Diasporas. This discussion reminds us of the people who inhabit the city but not the nation, making the city a congregation of strangers. According to her, in an attempt to make the city familiar, they make it strange by projecting images, idealizations and memories of their homeland onto the foreign land, creating a new city in their imagination. Seyhan focuses on Kate Braverman's novel, *Palm Latitudes*, which she says explores diverse situations and experiences of immigrants, as they reside in the psychological space between language and culture. Through language they keep alive their memories and homeland and core of their identity. Gloria, in this novel finds herself

confined in ghettos and interstitial zones, like so many migrants, finding the freedom of the city kind of elusive (216).

There are texts about cities, according to McNamara, which are designed to convey a mood where a city is distorted often to emphasize qualities like horror or sensationalism. He gives examples of novels like George W.M. Reynolds's *The Mysteries of London* (1844), *The Mysteries and Miseries of New York* (1849) by Ned Buntline and George Lippard's urban gothic, *The Quaker City* (145).

Unlike dystopian novels, according to Malcolm Miles, the twentieth century Avant-gardes saw the cities as the main literary subjects to call into question the bourgeois culture. The possibility of making one's own city out of what is given reintroduces human agency into the equation. The ideas of freeing the cities from the tyrannical shackles of cultural history were accompanied by strategies like bringing the art into the cities (153).

2:2 Slum Literature

The literary texts selected for inquiry in this thesis can be further categorised as the slum literature, which is a sub-genre of city literature. Slum as a setting for fictional narratives became particularly popular in nineteenth century Victorian novels, in the wake of industrialization, rapid urbanization and the accompanied poverty, squalor, deviance, crime, class divide and deprivation in mega cities which were otherwise centres of world power, wealth and politics. Slum narratives of nineteenth century were considered synonymous with the condition of England, a dilapidated condition of its inhabitants living lives of penury in urban corners, attics, cellars, courts and back alleys of deprivation, often hidden from common sights. They were 'rediscovered' and often sensationalised by the novelists and journalists for the urban middle class readers, evoking simultaneously sentiments of shock, sympathy, repulsion and excitement, consequently attracting commercial gains and success. David Trotter remarks that "analysing and diagnosing the condition of England, the intention was like their predecessors to combine moralistic motivations with financial gains (83).

Trotter gives credit of pioneering the slum fiction to Walter Besant and George Gissing in 1880s and later on young Rudyard Kipling, Arthur Morrison and Somerset Maugham capitalised on these early developments (116). Charles Dickens contribution to the rather picaresque and metaphorical adventures into the darker alleys of London was

also significant to the evolution of this genre which had by then developed its own distinct aesthetics of naturalistic tradition of artistic depictions of reality.

As Herman Ausubel and Louis L. Snyder argue, “often the influence of Zola’s naturalism was dominant in their works. However mostly they followed the course of early slum fiction which consisted of Disraeli’s *Sybil*, Charles Kingsley’s *Yeast*, Mrs. Gaskell’s *Mary Barton*, Dickens’ *Hard Times*, Charles Reade’s *It is Never Too Late to Mend*, and George Eliot’s *Felix Holt, the Radical*. They considered it an important function of fiction to expose and reform the society (30).”

Sir Walter Besant (1836-1901) was a famous novelist and a philanthropist of this time known for his work *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, a novel which idealised a utopian “Palace of Delight” for the slum dwellers as he found the place to be joyless rather than vicious. This idea was replicated in reality as People’s Palace, which was established in Miles End in London in 1887, for the education and recreation of slum dwellers (Britannica).

George Gissing (1857-1903) was another famous writer, who wrote in naturalistic fashion the poverty, deprivation and squalor of slum dwellers. His portrayal of these places was varied and individual ranging from sympathetic to critical and repulsive. *Workers in Dawn* (1880), *The Unclassed* (1884), and *The Nether World* (1889) are his novels known for a well-informed but unsympathetic delineation of slum dwellers as brutish and uncouth, with little hope of amelioration attached to the industrial progress.

The third slum novelist of the Victorian period was Arthur Morrison (1863-1945), who himself belonged to the working class. As P.J. Keating claims, “more than any other author it is Arthur Morrison who establishes the tone of slum fiction in the nineties (167)”. His novel *Tales of Mean Streets* (1864) is a realistic narrative of horrid living conditions and violence prevalent in the back alleys of East London. Similarly the novel *The Children of Jago* (1896) portrays the struggles and abuse which slum children go through.

Later on writers like Somerset Maugham continued this tradition of slum stories conflating fact and fiction. His novel *Liza of Lambeth* (1897) is often compared to Morrison’s fiction. Jack London (1876-1917), a journalist who disguised himself as an American sailor lived in the actual places and conditions along with the poor and came with the true first-hand accounts of their everyday struggles, *The People of the Abyss* (1903) which indeed was based on his personal observations of the disgraceful underbelly of the Empire (Dineijko n.p).

Slum fiction of those times was a significant, vivid and authentic contribution to the representation of lived experiences of the urban poor at the turn of the century. It not only served as social documents and chronicles of those lives and conditions but was also a socio-political commentary on the flaws of governance, class system and capitalism.

2:3 Review of Literature on Primary Texts

This thesis primarily engages with Samira Shackle's *Karachi Vice: Life and Death in a Contested City* (2021) and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (1995). *Karachi Vice: Life and Death in a Contested City* (2021) is a debut work of Samira Shackle, who is British journalist and a regular contributor to Guardian magazine. She frequently visits Karachi because of her family connections. This work is an evidence of her close ethnographic studies of Karachi's most tumultuous regions, ridden with acute poverty, violence and precarity.

This literature review takes into account the various perspectives which different scholars have adopted to analyse the selected primary texts and identify the gap in these approaches which this thesis attempts to explore. For this purpose I have chosen to mention the works which are most relevant and related to this study.

2:3:1 *Karachi Vice: Life and Death in a Contested City* (2021)

The text has yet to receive scholarly enquiry but it has been adequately reviewed in several articles and book review sections. According to Abhrajyoti Chakraborty this work has reflected turbulent times in a city marred by violence, through the stories of five characters. According to her, Shackle has carefully chosen characters and stories to reflect different sides of the shadow city. She has highlighted the fact that this city was once known for nightclubs and casino parties but the one shown in the novel is ridden with bombs, bullets and a constant sense of threat and insecurity. Yet the city retains a kind of charm which lures Shackle into discovering this contradictory nature of the city. According to Chakraborty, Shackle has excelled at drawing out incisive quotes from characters in her interviews. As Safdar tries to cope with the trauma of rescuing bodies from the bomb sites he tells her that he does not dwell on his memories. Memories are a prison. Similarly, Parveen expresses her pain when she remembers the peaceful times. She says that they snatched all happiness from them. Chakraborty is also of the opinion that though Shackle's intentions have been to detach herself from the narrative yet as her mother is from Karachi, it makes Shackle emotionally and intellectually invested in the city unlike any other foreign writer. Shackle laments the missing young men after the

peace operation and the forced encroachments by the Bahria Town (n.p).Tunku Varafarajan is of the view that the novel has faithfully exposed dysfunctional nature of Karachi's administration (1).

Nidhi Srinivas picks on the way this book shows how people endure violence and poverty. Punctuated by constant violence and death, the depiction of lives of these people is still not one sided in this novel. The tails of their activism and struggles as told by Shackle indicate her love for these people and the way these people endure hardships. Shackle also delineates the struggle for resources in the mega city of Karachi (Srinivas). It is a short review on this novel which has rightly pinpointed the existence of grassroot activism, resilience and a lively culture in the novel as an evidence of her love for these people. These representations can also be interpreted as agential potential of these people in making appropriations in informal ways as tactical measures pushing against the strategically boundaries set by the dominant conceptualizations of space.

According to Percy Bharucha, those interested in the city and its history should read *Karachi Vice*. Bharucha finds the structure and pace of the novel refreshing. The anecdotes of Safdar's marriage and the political discussions of local people over cups of tea in hole in the wall shops are light and warm moments amidst darkness of violence , terror and poverty. same situation or different issues faced by the underprivileged classes. Through Jannat's eyes the writer identifies the illegal encroachments of the villages and the struggle and helplessness of the village people. Then through Parveen the writer features woman issues and their activism and iron resolve in braving the odds. Through Safdar's eyes one can see the visceral and blood curdling reality of daily violence (Bharucha). Rabia Saleem reviews the novel as tale of a city where the borders blur between politicians and gangsters as dangerous new forces of violent extremism are pitted against old networks of power (2).

Annie Kapur reviews the work as creative non-fiction about homecoming, activism and the difference between east and the west. According to her the book is a window into the culture of Karachi avoiding romanticisation and sensationalism. Kapur hails the work as having the potential of becoming a classic and a prime work of Pakistani creative writing in many years to come. Kapur is particularly fascinated by the character of Parveen as extremely powerful and brave showing the true face of women doing activism in a society which is both patriarchal as well as violent. Kapur is critical towards the length of the novel and thinks that it is too short and that she wanted to know a lot more about the past and present of the characters and the process of their cultural

learning. However, she ends her review on the note that the book must be read by the people in the west who stereotype the people in the east as unaware and indifferent to the social issues around them (3).

Ruth Avery gives credit to Shackle for make her aware of politics of Pakistan as earlier she only knew of the cricket team. Ruth especially highlights the usefulness of guideline of Pakistani political parties given at the start of the book. According to her the central character of the novel is the ambulance driver, Safdar. She revers his professional and humane approach towards his work. Avery finds his wedding funny, as his mother feigns sickness to get him married. She also finds it different from her own culture. Another example she gives of cultural difference is the marriage of a 10 year old girl with a 25 years boy. Although the novel can be appreciated as a factual account of certain areas in certain times, but such novels do create an impression over a foreign reader that such things are ubiquitous in Pakistan at all times, cementing the already existing prejudices about the country . However Avery does find the text itself and the description of places, people, culture, and food quite colourful , making her eager to visit Pakistan one day in peaceful times (4).

All these discussions leave the gap to study the spatial aspects of this novel which includes the study of mutual relationship that exists between the space and its dwellers. My thesis endeavours to explore the production of urban space through informality and violence and the political nature of this spatial production by employing theoretical lens which have hitherto been not employed in discussions surrounding this novel.

2:3:2 A Fine Balance (1995)

The novel has been researched and scholarly viewed by many scholars from different standpoints. It is pertinent to take a look at literature already available on this novel and thus locate the gap in these various studies which this thesis intends to fill in.

Ian Almond in his article *On Re-Orientalizing the Indian Novel: A Case Study of Rohinton Mistry's A Fine Balance*, studies it along with Mulk Anand's *The Untouchables* and reinterprets the main themes of resilience and resignation in these novels. In his interpretation he foregrounds yeatsian imagination of the stoic east and how these novels reinforce this oriental image of the eastern man as stoic and a paragon of mystical resignation. This is a fascinating interpretation; however it evades the debilitating effects of poverty and poverty spaces on the mind and bodies of the poor, numbing them to a state of resignation perpetuating generational poverty.

T.Abrami and P.Kiruthika in their article *A Struggle for Identity and Survival in Rohinton Mistry A Fine Balance* focused on the portrayal of struggles of characters face in the contemporary world especially struggle for Identity and Survival. Migration from a small village to a big city creates a sense of loneliness and rootlessness which is aggravated by financial depravity.

Rohinton Mistry is a Canadian based Indian author and *A Fine Balance* is often read as a diasporic novel which depicts diasporic diversion and dislocation of an individual or group, one who leave their homeland and went for seeking job in other lands. Mostly scholars have explored diasporic themes like alienation and marginalisation of the migrant workers. R.Jesudas and K.Chelladurai in his article *The Voice of the Marginalized in Rohinton Mistry's A Fine Balance* argues that Mistry is deeply interested in history and past. His novels are often reflection of parsi dilemma of double displacement. As an immigrant writer he delves into the past to reconstruct his identity. This article takes the stance that in his stories such as *A Fine Balance* and *Tales from Frozsha Baag*, are an articulation of the ambivalent space between the character and the narrator thus expressing his own sense of hybridity through the characters (1).

K.Shenbagapriya, T. Poornima in their article *Moral Dimensions in Rohinton Mistry A Fine Balance* bring to light the dignified way in which main characters the tailors Ishvar and Omprakash endure and the heroic manner in which they strive to survive.

Devid Payeng in his article *power Dynamics and Predicaments of the Marginalized in A Fine Balance* uses various concepts of power by Foucault as theoretical framework to study traditional power structures of Indian society like cast system and their relation to the marginalization of the some section of people in post-independent India as depicted in the novel.

R.Kumara Balaji, Dr.V.Vimala in their article *Thrust against Social Difference in Rohinton Mistry's a Fine Balance* state that Mistry's novel is in line with reformist fiction with a humanist agenda to expose the ills of society and the system which tyrannizes the already marginalized classes to complete infirmity.

P.Murugesan and Dr.R. Soundararajan in their article *Depiction of Slum Life in Rohinton Mistry's A Fine Balance* sheds light on the fact that the novel depicts the every day life of its characters in detail to explore the tragic circumstances of India's desperate poor especially those belonging to the lowest castes.

James w.johnson in his article “*Beggaring the Nation*”: *Bodily inscription and the Body politic in Rohinton Mistry’s A Fine Balance* is a corporeal analysis of this novel. He finds a pervasive use of bodily metaphor in this novel reinforcing the belief in representational capacity of the body and how history and politics are inscribed on the body (1).

A number of scholars have highlighted the constant presence of bodily metaphor in the fiction of Mistry. John Eustace offers a compelling argument for understanding the evaluative body and excremental representations in Mistry’s works. In his examination of Keynesian economics in *A Fine Balance*, Tyler Tokatyk offers an interpretation where he engages with the Bakhtinian concept of grotesque body and how in this novel these grotesque bodies are analogous to the perversity of developmental economics“(21). Similarly in his critical biography *Rohinton Mistry* Peter Morey points towards the broader relationship between individual bodies and the body politic in *A Fine Balance*.(102).

Sadia Ashraf in her article *Emergency -A Self-justifying Ideological Tool in A Fine Balance by Rohinton Mistry* suggests that Rohinton Mistry in this novel writes with a Marxist orientation and in this novel one finds the increased sophistication in ways the marginalized are cornered to helplessness. She brings forth theories of power to argue and investigate that how in implicit ways the power structures work to make the weak accept the structures of inequality and injustice and resign to them as their fate. The state during emergency successfully makes people comply to the ruthless steps it takes through tools of discourse, ideology and hegemony. This thesis also analysis the role of state in repression of underclasses but its primary focus is on the fact that how it uses space as an instrument to claim its hegemony and enforce its discourse and ideology .

2:3:3 Conclusion

After reviewing the available literature on the two selected texts, I have concluded that though there is enough scope for **geocritical** scholarship on these novels yet the gap for such studies can be located in various interdisciplinary approaches which has been earlier adopted in these articles. Although there are many articles on the novel *A Fine Balance* about the graphic description of slum life or the Marxist analysis of torment faced by the marginalized but they lack an investigation on the political implications of spatial appropriations made by these people. These appropriations contribute to the making of the informal city or slum spaces. The thesis inquires into the political possibilities of these informal practices for the poor inhabitants. This thesis contributes to

the debate that whether such activities are an evidence of agential capacity of the underclasses or mere tactics to survive the worst possible circumstances. There are no articles available which investigate these questions. The scholarship also lacks an in-depth inquiry into the particular production of South Asian urban metropolis through informal practices and lack of its representation in the discourse of spatial planning which is dominated by modern Eurocentric visions of a city . This thesis attempts to fill this gap by studying production of slum spaces as informal spaces in these novels, employing Lefebvre's theoretical lens of spatial triad. There exists a mutually constitutive relationship between body and space. Social space is a social construction and every society creates its own space. Lefebvre has devised a unitary theory for this social construction of space involving various forces at various levels, all constituting space in a trialectic manner, acting simultaneously but often in conflicting manner. This thesis attempts to study the production of informal spaces in this manner and the conflicts underlying such process. These spaces in turn have implications for bodies and powers governing them. The study through instances from these novels attempts to diagnose the possible ramifications of appropriative practices of the disadvantaged groups in urban centres.

2:4 Literature Review of the Primary Theoretical Framework

Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad is the primary theoretical framework which this work engages with. His work *The Production of Space* which includes this triad was translated in 1991, which according to Stuart Elden initiated a renaissance of interest in his works in the European world. His spatial conceptualizations are relevant to studies in urban sociology and cultural studies. The initial propositions of *The Production of Space* have been expanded by a wide range of scholars. In this literature review, the scholarship relevant to the spatial triad is briefly reviewed.

Stuart Elden in his article argues that in order to understand the space we need to grasp the concrete and the abstract together. Just as Lefebvre described the state as a realised abstraction, space too is a realized abstraction. Elden observes a unification of materialism and idealism in Lefebvre's theorisation of space. Space is a mental as well as a material construct and between these two poles lie the human lived experience (biological, psychological and social time scales) which brings time to the equation of production of space. This time determines the way in which we perceive and conceive of

the world. In other words the socially produced time and space depends upon the mental and physical constructs (8).

This concept of space takes the form of the spatial triad ; representations of space (idealism), spatial practice (materialism) and the spaces of representation (materialism and idealism). Elden also traces influence of Heidegger in the concept of the lived space , a notion which according to him is his central contribution. In his discussion of lived experience of everyday life , Lefebvre incorporates Heidegger's ideas about poetic dwelling and crisis of dwelling which ensues from a strange kind of rage for measurements and calculations(9).

Andy Murrifield in her article focuses on the Marxist proclivities of Lefebvre and how it differs from the classical Marxism. She calls it libertarian anarchism, an ambiguous, festive, urban Marxism. Alongside Marxism, we find Freud, Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger as well in his urban space. Writing about the unconscious he finds that in the city unconscious desires and passions lay dormant, dormant beneath the real, within the unreal. Marx is right when he says that politico-economic forces both shape and constrain these unconscious desires and passions. According to Murrifield, Lefebvre wants the cities to release this repression. He idealises the city to provide means for free association and arenas for intense sexual and sensual excitement. It can also be in the form of collective and individual rituals of resistance, which should be luminous festivals of people (55).

Festivals are antithesis of bureaucratic control and are exhibitions of excess and orgy. Envisioning the urban street as a stage, Lefebvres want them to be spaces of drama, demonstrations, spontaneity and carnivalesque spirit. This was the spirit which found resonance in May 68 protests. He lectured and participated in these protests and his ideas complemented the subversive radicalism of the situationists. Murrified argues in the favour of bringing lefebvre's ideas to our cities and think that they are still relevant with modern movements like reclaim the cities. Such urban street activities have the capacity to politicise the alienated youth and be concerned about the fate of our cities, which should be aesthetic as well as ethical, ordered as well as disordered, managed yet somehow spontaneous. Murrifield also invites the scholars and intellectuals of her field to introspect the academic space which has become the commodified abstract space of capitalism, following the order imposed by the financial contingencies. She exhorts her fraternity to be inspired by Lefebvrian call for freedom and imagination(57).

Christian Schmid in his article *Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space; towards a three dimensional dialectic* argues that different interpretations of the spatial triad has many shortcomings and add more to confusion than explanation. He particularly finds Edward Soja's interpretation as problematic, notwithstanding the influence they exercise in field of geography. Soja comes up with independent paces out of the three dimensions or moments of the production of space. Soja conceptualizes three independent spaces; a first physical space, a second mental space, and a third social space. He observes a strategic importance in social space and calls it "thirdspace". According to Lefebvre, there cannot be a "thirdspace", nor a first or second space. Lefebvre's discussion never comes forth from three independent spaces but from three dialectically interconnected processes of production. Even though Soja frequently refers to Lefebvre, his spatial theory is, all things considered, fundamentally different from Lefebvre's theory of production of space (43).

Schmid further suggests that Rob Shields, who is famous for his comprehensive work on Lefebvre, goes through considerable issues or confusion in dealing with the dialectic. Shields asserts that Lefebvre has not dealt with the meaning of the spatial dialectic in an exhaustive manner. Shields interprets Lefebvre's dialectic as thesis with two antithesis; the thesis is "everyday practice and perception"; the first antithesis is "analytical theory and institutions"; and the second antithesis comprises the "fully lived moments". However, Shields himself considers such an exposition confusing, and then attempt to retranslate Lefebvre's dialectic back to the classic Hegelian schema of affirmation, negation, and negation of negation. To complete this schema, Shields then finds a fourth, transcendental concept that he terms "the spatialisation". Grappling with Lefebvre's dialectic finally ends-in Shield's-in total confusion (47).

Schmid concludes that the three dimensions of the production of space have to be understood as being fundamentally of equal importance. Space is at once perceived, conceived, and lived. None of these dimensions can be posited as the absolute origin, as "thesis", and none is privileged. Space is unfinished, since it is continuously produced, and it is always bound up with time (50).

Stephan Kipfer in his article *How Lefebvre Urbanized Gramsci* argues as he traces the gramscian influence in Lefebvrian thought that Lefebvre redirected Gramsci in postulating that the state itself is an instrument, site, and an outcome of struggle for hegemony. State with its paraphernalia of institutions and hierarchical bureaucracy, follows the logic of hierarchy, functional separation, essential to administration of the

commodity itself. The state with its state-like form overbears all aspects of society, so much so it becomes identical with life. For Lefebvre, the state is hegemonic to the extent that it impacts and diffuses into everyday life in an overpowering way, and for Lefebvre the impact is mediated spatially by the state, especially through urbanization of the space. The consensual aspect of this hegemony takes the form of familiar social spaces like the post office, city hall, the train station, the bistro, the grocery store. Lefebvre redirects gramscian thought towards the urban critical theory (208).

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre explicitly links the problematic of hegemony to the production of space, agreeing with Gramsci that hegemony can be enforced in ways other than violence or other repressive measures. Bourgeois influence and implicit control over culture, ideas, institutions and knowledge supported by policies, political leaders, parties and intellectuals is also hegemonic in nature. Most importantly he underlines the importance of the production of space for the analysis of hegemony. The dominant form of produced space under capitalism is abstract. It is shaped by the relentless forms of repetition, homogenizing abstraction, and alienating separation of the commodity, the state, technocratic knowledge, and patriarchy. Although structurally violent, abstract space is hegemonic to the degree that it envelopes and incorporates the daily aspirations, desires, and dreams of subaltern populations. For example the bungalow and the high rise tower are two spatial forms of neo-capitalism, which are standardized industrial products but they also embody hopes for social reform, domestic harmony, and reconciliation with nature. With the potential of creating hopes they become tools of consensual hegemony, where people's life gets controlled with their consent through urbanization of space (209).

Richard Millgrom in his article *Design, difference, everyday life* articulates the role played by architecture in social production of space. Milgrom particularly delineates his concern with the role played by architects in producing sustainable urban spaces, which he argues are often in disconnect with social and everyday lives of inhabitants. While their designs purport to address the ecological issues and conditions of human health, Milgrom contends that these proposals fall under the category of *abstract space*, neglecting facets of everyday life, repressing the diversity of populations assuming a standardized and static social structure. He places the architectural process within Lefebvre's conceptual triad of the production of space. Based on his analysis, he postulates that the architect Lucien Kroll's approach to design, represented an attempt to

imagine differential space that includes the possibility of including both ecological and social diversity (280).

Goonewardena is of the opinion that Lefebvre's meta philosophy is laced with Eurocentrism, with colonization and imperialism appearing only as secondary concerns. Lefebvre's work needs to be complemented by other radical approaches that can shed light on the specifically imperial, patriarchal, racialized, and class-specific aspects. According to Goonewardena Lefebvre's concept of colonization must be complemented with explicitly anti-racist and feminist analysis of the relationship between urbanization and imperialism (313).

Klaus Ronneberger in his article *Lefebvre and urban everyday life* speculates of Lefebvre's approach in order to understand the post fordist everyday life. The fordist growth models faced crisis in 1970s because of exhaustion of productivity of Taylorism and inefficacy of Keynesian welfare state which was undermined by increased economic internationalization. As Ronneberger argues that increased wages and growth of education somehow created free minds which reacted against the rigid disciplinary techniques of Fordism. It did not lead to any fundamental change of system, however capitalism responded to these movements with new identities and new consumption patterns. The new technologies of power associated with neoliberalism attempt to individualize social risks, dismantle erstwhile social rights and subject people to self-regulation. Reacting to growing demands for more individuality, neoliberalism invites individuals and organizations to participate more actively and help solve particular issues and problems which until then had been responsibility of specialists and authorized state institutions.

2:4:1 Conclusion

I conclude this literature review with Ronneberger's comments that flexible capitalism managed to absorb the libertarian potential of the artistic critique. As a result, the conventional social critique became increasingly eliminated. It has led to the transformation of everyday life which has become such a reality that can no longer be interpreted with the conventional means of social critique. It is here that the limitation of Lefebvre's critique becomes evident. Although he was able to rise above certain creeds of Marxism, but he remained stuck into a theory of revolution that was grounded in a philosophy of history. Contrary to his belief that a trend towards radical-democratic self-management (autogestion) was unavoidable, capitalism has become even stronger following the crisis of Fordism; it has proven itself capable of absorbing its critics, taking

up oppositional claims for autonomy and creativity and instrumentalizing them for its own purposes(156).

Despite these limitations, Ronneberger is of the opinion that Lefebvre's concept of everyday life remains visionary. Considering the contemporary processes of capitalists societalization, the conventional divisions of paid and unpaid work, production and reproduction have definitely become outdated. Capital endeavours to manage and control all facets of life by dominating not only the capacity to labour (labour; power) but also creative potential. Against the "postmodern" technologies and procedures of control, resistance manifests itself in wide variety of realms; struggles against exploitation and oppression, struggles against exclusion, struggles against predefined subject positions. Resisting the dictates of neoliberalism thus needs two tasks. On one hand, a social critique must be developed that considers contemporary social relations and power structures. On the other hand the artistic critique must be kept from being becoming a tool of the new kind of productivists subjectivity(156). This thesis is also an attempt of becoming part of such a social critique, while acknowledging the limitations of Lefebvre's revolutionary theory.

There is also a need of debating Lefebvre's Eurocentric intellectual Marxism, which has its roots in situationists movements of 1968. Although these movements offered powerful critiques on the alienating and commodifying impact of advanced capitalism on everyday life, yet it was not a movement spearheaded by the proletariat. The way they occupied spaces, gave Lefebvre the hopes of revolutionary changes by appropriating urban spaces. This thesis anchors itself in Lefebvrian concepts of production of space, abstract/differential space, but it complements it with class-specific politics of space in the context of slums (informal spaces) of South Asian cities.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis will endeavour to make Lefebvre's concept of *Spatial Triad* articulate with de Certeau's concept of *Strategy and Tactics* and Chattopadhyay's *Unlearning the City*. This dialogue between these concepts will lead the thesis to determine the potential of spatial appropriative practices by Lefebvre in changing the power structures by making it articulate with de Certeau's concept of *Strategy and Tactics* which does recognize the subversive impact of tactical/appropriative practices but deny its revolutionary force as put forward by Lefebvre. Furthermore, this thesis seeks to extend Lefebvre's concepts to explore how the usage of space by its dwellers should change the way we learn about space or its implications on the modern city discourse through Chattopadhyay's concept of *Unlearning the City*.

The selected theoretical lens can be broadly placed in **neoliberal** debates about the city which is largely embedded in **Marxist Urban Theory**. Modern mega cities are seen as products of neoliberalization (curtailment of state control over trade/business) of economic practices. Issues and debates around gentrification, uneven development, class segregation, right to the city, spatial justice and financialization/commodification of space are central to the theoretical discussions within the Marxist urban thought.

Before the modern urban Marxist scholars, it was Marx and Engels who indicated the redefinition of cities by modern capitalist dynamics. In their urban narrative of the rise of capitalism, they rooted the urban in the commercial cities of the late middle ages and the role of merchant capital. Engels developed works like *The Housing Question* (1872) and *The Condition of English Working Class* (1844) to address issues faced by the working class in cities driven by neoliberal logic of economy.

In recent times David Harvey has contributed rigorously to the scholarship surrounding the spatial embodiments of capitalism and the related issues of spatial justice and right to the city. Harvey advances the concept of the modern city as a site of production and accumulation where the built environment absorbs the surplus of capital accumulation in the form of buildings, infrastructure and landscape. Manuel Castells, the author of works like *The Urban Question* (1977) and *Social Justice and the City* (1973), sees the city as an arena of social conflicts ultimately emanating from the class divisions within capitalist society. Castells in *The City and the Grassroots* (1983) studied a range of social movements in American and European industrial cities that arose in resistance to

capitalist rationalization of the urban environment including attempts to preserve public services or public spaces for their use value against a capitalist rationality that would privatize and put a prize tag on them.

Henry Lefebvre (1901-1991), born in France, was a leading Marxist sociologist, who in the wake of events of 1968, responded with works on everyday life and production of space from the vantage point of Marxism or historical materialism. Earlier space was treated as an abstract concept having no real relevance but later on a shift occurred realising its importance in power politics, control and contestation. Physical spaces in the form of architecture and built environment were discursively created reflecting certain ideas of those holding power (West-Pavlov 112). The 1968 uprising by the students involved the occupation of key symbolic sites in Paris. Lefebvre's reaction to the events of May 1968 reflects his ideas about the liberating potential of space depending upon how it is used in human practice. If spaces are produced to negatively impact human society, to control it, the same (the unjust and oppressive geographies) can be changed to change the society.

3:1 Lefebvre's Spatial Triad

Henry Lefebvre in his path breaking work *The Production of Space* (1974), lays out the famous *spatial triad* which asserted a dialectical relationship between space and society. He claimed that in order to have a knowledgeable discussion about space it is necessary to know that how it is produced, which assumes that it is produced and is not an empty stage where society happens without impacting it. This mode of thinking ultimately leads him to the idea that space is political in nature having a mutually constitutive relationship with society. (Lefebvre 388) (Zielenic 60). This relationship is causal in nature and is also characterised by dialectical tension.

Lefebvre conceptualizes this relationship in the form of a spatial triad which are moments of production of space, almost simultaneous and trialectical in nature. They unify the mental (conceived), physical (perceived) and social (lived) moments of production of space. The analytical concepts can be explained as follows.

Spatial practice (perceived space) It is the physical built environment, often a material and ideological configuration of the conceived space. People in their everyday activities comply these configurations, organising their movements, flows, interactions around them, producing and reproducing the social space. It involves both the physical environment as well as human physical activities which mould themselves according to

this environment like working, playing, buying, selling, travelling etc. In other words it is what people do in these spaces including the special purposes for which these spaces and infrastructures are used like using the specific sites for housing which are meant for the purpose, or using streets, roads and highways for transport and commutation or sites for trade and commerce. These activities mostly follow the logic of formal representations of space in the form of city plans and designs. As they often have a physical existence they can be perceived by the eye and can be considered absolute or fixed in nature (Lefebvre 33,38).

Representation of space (conceived space)- This is the mental moment of production of space and Lefebvre considers it the dominant space or dominant aspect of production of space. It is the moment of conceptualization of space by experts like city planners, engineers or architects. He associates power and hegemony to this aspect and claims that these mappings and plans of space are driven by dominant discourses and are imbued with ideological standpoints (Lefebvre 38-39).

Spaces of representation (lived space) are the spaces of lived experience - directly encountered through everyday practices. These are spontaneous, unregulated, unstructured and unhegemonic spaces of everyday experience and daily life. These are not fixed or absolute spaces and get transformed through usage and experience which imbue it with meaning. Lefebvre posits this space as a launching pad against hegemonic notions of space and society. (Harvey 218). For Lefebvre, spaces of representation are “the dominated, and hence passively experienced, space that imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre 39). They are spaces “associated to the secretive and hidden side of social life” (33). Lefebvre’s spaces of representation are the physical and mental moments in spatial reality combined into social space.

The elements of this triad are linked to each other and these links help us understand the social process of production of space. The dialectic of Lefebvre can be understood as consisting of the thesis that the essential nature of space is material with physical objects in it having geographical locations. The antithesis is that the space is produced out of relations between people and between people and space. Lastly, the synthesis is that space is a social product; it has concurrent traits of being a thing, an object as well a process. As social relations occur through it and in it , it is also a tool for change (Zielenic 69).

Lefebvre has done considerable work on space, urbanisation and everyday life in the context of capitalism and how it determines their relationship and future course.

Instead of treating space as an alienated whole, he theorises it as a product of interlinked constituent parts, the understanding of which is essential to get true knowledge of space. The space can be democratized, transformed and radicalized once it is known that how it is produced. Lefebvre was conscious of the fact that the contemporary urban spatial forms and configurations have a historical progression influenced by politics and economy of different times. Lefebvre rejects the idea of neutrality of space (Zielenic 3). “Underlying the apparently natural and historically moulded space is the reality of politics and ideology which play an important role in its production and control” (Lefebvre 341).

To understand modern urbanisation and its implications for the mundanities of life, it is necessary to know the powers which control, change and regulate the space. Spatial and temporal practices are never neutral in social affairs. That is why Harvey is of the opinion that spaces are not neutral in essence, especially social spaces, they are indications of different social patterns, social classes and the struggles between them (Harvey 239). Lefebvre uses the terms “domination” and “appropriation” in his spatial triad to hint towards this sociospatial struggle. The conceived space is termed as the dominated space, being conceptualized by dominant structures of power, which the dwellers of space seek to appropriate through spatial practices.

3:1:1 Abstract Space

According to Lefebvre the conceived space (representations of space), which is produced (often regulated by the space) under the logic of capitalism is an abstract space, a space oriented towards exchange value, commodification and homogenisation of space. This is a dominant space (Lefebvre 49-53). This space is characterised by **homogenization, fragmentation** and **hierarchisation**. This abstract space, like a commodity is contradictorily both homogenized as well as fragmented. It is homogenized as a quantifiable, measurable and saleable commodity having an exchange value, losing its intrinsic peculiarities. Yet, there is also fragmentation, as the land is divided into pieces of space, not based on any intrinsic differences but a process of parcelling required by land speculation, functionalist zoning, or segregation by the state (Stanek 72). Third trait of abstract space is hierarchical ordering of space driven by capital accumulation and supported by dominant forces of law, state and economy. Lefebvre in this regard gives example of dominance of centre over periphery and urban over the country side (Lefebvre 17).

3:1.2 Differential Spaces

This is a space which prioritises inclusiveness and use value rather than the exchange value of abstract space. This space is ephemeral in nature which can emerge from the inherent vulnerabilities and contradictions of abstract space (Lefebvre 54).

Lefebvre's conceptualisation of differential space is often considered ambivalent by the critics. While he associates this space to post revolution, classless and stateless utopian society, "there will be a revolution out of which will emerge a planetary space of transformed everyday life open to many possibilities" (Lefebvre 422-23). He also points it out in the informal settlements of Favelas of Brazil, a differential space which emerges out of 'here and now contestation' of city and 'bodily re-appropriation' of city space as vast counter space that evades the control of the hegemonic order (Lefebvre 383).

This thesis does acknowledge the subverting potential and agential capacity of these appropriations in producing embodied spaces of difference and heterogeneity. These informal usages of space are also great tactics of survival and reclamation to rights of residence and basic services. Yet they cannot be romanticized as best solutions to deprivation or as harbingers of proletariat revolution. The thesis takes note of the precarious conditions and the constant threat of evictions these people face, almost on the daily basis. A revolution of the kind Lefebvre theorises about might be a farfetched romantic ideal, but a welfare state is a possibility which must be strived for. This can be and should be the pragmatic goal of such appropriations.

3:2 De Certeau's concept of *strategy and tactics* (1980)

The concepts of change, domination and appropriation from Lefebvre's triad can be further understood and extrapolated through de Certeau's concept of **Strategy and Tactics** from his work *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980). Certeau's concepts of *Strategy and Tactics* can be well used in triangulation with *Lefebvre's Spatial Triad* to read into how the weak negotiates and produces space in the context of informality and violence. Similarly the two theories can be made to articulate with each other to explore the revolutionary potential of appropriative practices or their implications for the power structures. Lefebvre has romantic vision of revolutionary potential of these practices but de Certeau, though he recognizes the subversive impact of tactical practices yet he also propounds that one cannot step outside the system through these acts of subversion and "tactics do not keep what they have" (45).

According to this concept strategy is the specific way of exercising and maintaining power by those having access to it. Tactics on the other hand are ways in which strategies can be subverted or resisted and are often employed by those not having access to power. Strategies exploit space and power to control and discipline bodies and tactics manipulate time along with space in the sphere of everyday life.

Michel de Certeau, is a prominent scholar on the discussions surrounding everyday life in the context of urban space and becomes part of this debate by intervening in Foucault's concept of "discipline". For de Certeau, it is in the arena of everyday life that people instead of producing power, they consume power through their show of daily practice in the network of anti-discipline (15). He gives the concept of strategy and tactics, where strategies are the methods and calculations of the powerful to maintain power especially the control of space and tactics on the other hand are methods and calculations of individuals and groups who try to evade this control and resist it through everyday activities. They are often hidden or invisible in nature as opposed to strategies which are meant to be seen.

The practice of Everyday Life is a book by de Certeau in which he presents his observations and examines them to explore the capacity of ordinary people to adopt mass culture, law, rituals or language which suit their needs, desires, goals and circumstances, making them their own. Like an artist or a political/social activists using a city wall for graffiti or political wall writing, using the space in a way it is not intended to be used. According to de Certeau "tactics is the art of the weak" (37). It is through tactics that they sneak through the cracks of strategy and change the rather fixed and established character of urban space moulded to their desires, and thus, urban space is re-experienced and reconstructed.

3:3 Chattopadhyay's concept of *Unlearning the City* (2012)

This discussion of domination and appropriation further leads us to questions of representation in dominant connotations /discourses about global urbanism and how we learn about cities and create knowledge about them. Lefebvre is of the opinion that the rationality of capitalist growth works and gains domination through concrete abstraction of social space. This abstract space "is not only produced by the forces and relations of production and property; it is also a political product, a product of administrative and repressive controls, a product of relations of domination and strategies decided at the summit of the state"(Lefebvre 214). This space is produced through the technology of

spatial planning, which uses knowledge to structure space in the perspective of unlimited growth (Lefebvre 113) and to impose order on the irrationality of pre-existing social spaces. Spatial planning is depicted as a purely technocratic operation-“the epitome of rational abstraction” (Lefebvre 31). Swati Chattopadhyay in her (2012) book *UnlearningCity: Infrastructure in a New Optical Field* argues to unlearn the inherited and stubborn western ways of thinking and producing knowledge, which drives spatial planning. The work is an exercise in defamiliarization of this mode of knowing the urban.

Cities are more than their physical structures of concrete and steel. The making of a city includes the lived experience of its inhabitants and the modern urban theory lacks the language to describe this aspect of urban life. Chadhopadhyay in this book asserts the need to have a new vocabulary that may capture this ever changing, unstructured and messy reality of city making at the level of the everyday life by its dwellers. She largely focuses on examples from the Indian popular culture with the subaltern at its centre, merging the subaltern studies with the urban planning and architectural theory.

Chadhopadhyay for instance introduces terms like “Fungible (replaceable) Geographies”, “ephemerality and contingency” to describe certain urban configurations which originate from the way they are used by the city dwellers. The example she focuses on in this regard is of “pandals” built for Durga pooja festival. They are often grand structures made from bamboos, emulating temples in their designs. They are built on public spaces like streets, roads or parks. When the festival started in the colonial era, the pooja mostly occurred in courtyards and verandas (called Thakur-dalans) of high cast Hindus. It was later on that Hindus of other casts took this festival over and brought it into the streets making it a part of Indian popular culture. The pandals are temporary temples where the strict rules of Brahmins do not apply which create restrictions for other casts in ordinary temples. Chadhopadyay argues that these structures challenge the habit of disciplinary imagination in architecture and urban design that presumes permanence as necessary. These pandals create urban spaces or urban geographies which are fungible, ephemeral and contingent on the spaces where they are built. The material used in these pandals is light in weight, easily dismantled and reused for other purposes. The design of the pandal is contingent upon the materiality of the space and what a particular urban location affords in terms of design. The pandal design as it draws within itself the everyday of the urban fabric, treats the street or the urban space as a soft entity-malleable, connectable and appropriable. This place making potential of the “ephemeral” makes it possible for the low caste Hindus to worship outside the elite precepts of the temple.

A key term she uses is infrastructure. Part of her task is to consider infrastructure as a visual and material cultural politics. This cultural politics often involves the weaker sections of society and thus lacks representation. To fill in this gap we need to see the urban materiality in new light. For example, Chattopadhyay aims to rethink the street as a space of habitation, of ephemeral performance and experience, rather than mere usage. She gives the example of how cricket, through activity, changes the infrastructure of street temporarily : “ it is created out of a series of conjunctures , of bodies and objects, movements and views, noise and warmth, walls and roads, events and memories”(Chattopadhyay 119). Infrastructure here shifts from roads as primary urban form of transit to streets as a variegated set of experiences, a “texture of the conjectural” (120). This leads us back to the concept of *lived space* in Lefebvre’s spatial triad, which is a combination of spatial practices, conceived space and the force of human subjectivity and imagination. A place which “imagination seeks to appropriate”. This imaginative appropriation of urban spaces, according to Chattopadhyay, creates the need to place these spaces in new optical field and be redefined.

She specifically brings our attention towards the way subaltern negotiate urban space in a tactical manner and changes its character. A footpath becomes home when a labourer sleeps on it at night or market when street vendors do their business during the day . Her focus is mainly on how the urban subaltern use city spaces to their needs. Her work invites to see the city through the optical field of subaltern consumption of city spaces and redefine them according to the way these are used by them. She gives the example of how cricket is not just a past time but as a public space of political performance, making the street a meeting place of friends, neighbours and spectators, as well as a relay of bodily affects, arguments, and casual conversation. Again like de Certeau ‘s thoughts on everyday life and Lefebvre’s concept of appropriation through every day spatial practices by users and inhabitants, Chattopadhyay seeks to define the city from down below and seeks to create knowledge about it the way it is used at the urban everyday level.

CHAPTER 4

PRODUCTION AND POLITICS OF INFORMAL SPACES IN *KARACHI VICE* BY SAMIRA SHACKLE

4:1 Introduction and Brief Summary of *Karachi Vice* by Samira Shackle

As discussed earlier in literature review that the selected texts can be broadly situated in the realm of slum fiction, as they narrate intimate details of struggles and precarity of slum life. The texts are a mirror to the inequality, segregation and deprivation perpetuated by cities which in the wake of late capitalism have become instruments of capital accumulation and centralized political control. The neoliberal state led production of space through linked acts of omission and commission results in informal settlements by the inhabitants of the city. The analysis will include references from selected literary texts, selected theorists and related research articles in order to inquire the production of informal spaces and the political nature of this production mainly underpinned by Lefebvre's spatial triad. The texts are based in two South Asian mega cities. South Asian slums of mega cities are one of the largest and poorest informal settlements of the world. Although these spaces provide the major labour force to the country, still the conditions in these slums are exacerbated by the fact that governments in these countries are corrupt, inefficient and completely apathetic to their plight, making the rich poor divide even more glaring in these cities. However, being large in population and area these informal appropriations of space by the urban poor are an important component of the visual culture of South Asian cities. The first text to be analysed under this investigation is "Karachi Vice; Life and Death in a contested City".

4:1:2 Brief Summary of *Karachi Vice*

The text *Karachi Vice* is set in these slums, mainly the violent regions of Lyari and Orangi. It captures the real life narratives of five inhabitants of these areas caught in the cross wars of gangs, especially when the gang violence was at its crescendo. The analysis takes note of the kind of space produced at various levels of informal practices of disempowered citizens of an unjust, unequal and a mismanaged city. The discussion also includes the repercussions and consequences of these practices for the system and the citizen.

The text under discussion, *Karachi vice* by the journalist writer Samira Shackle, is a narrative non-fiction, as mentioned by the writer herself in the author's note given at the end of the book. The author has selected five characters and their stories to lay bare violence and changes taking place in the city since the partition, through their eyes and their emotive responses to those events. From fear and compromise to unbending integrity, resilience and hope, these characters embody what we might refer to as the spirit of this great city. As Nicholas Khan mentions in his review of this book that Shackle's success is to lucidly describe the minuteness of everyday day life knitting them around the real life ebb and flows of five characters and their individual struggles to serve their community (3).

She navigates the terrain of urban inequalities by focusing on lives of five different characters and their activism. Each chapter is named after one of these characters. Safdar is a Pakhtun ambulance driver from a remote village in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who is now living in Landhi. Parveen runs a street school and is also a social activists and belongs to the Baloch community of Lyari. Siraj belongs to the community of Bihari migrants who migrated from Bangladesh in 1971 and is a founder of Technical Training Resource Centre in Orangi. Jannat is a young mother from a Sindhi Kachelo tribe living in the East of Karachi and who along with other inhabitants of the village fights against the coercion and high-handedness of Bahria Town authorities. Zille belongs to the Shia community of Landhi and is a crime journalist at GEO news channel (Nicholas 37). Their individual stories are divided into discreet chapters. The only intersecting point in their stories is that their lives and dwellings are rife with violence, lawlessness and deprivation. The other similarity is the undaunting activism they exhibit against the odds they find themselves and their communities in.

4:2 Spatial Politics at the Everyday Level in *Karachi Vice*

The primary focus of this thesis is to analyse how the spatial politics play out at the urban everyday level especially in slums. The hegemony of neoliberal state diffuses into everyday life, manifesting itself in the form of production of informal spaces (slums), segregation, homogenization and heirarchisation of city spaces.

The book opens with Shackle's first impressions of Karachi on her journey from airport "through the choke holds of traffic that render car passengers vulnerable to armed robbery, past the edifices of faultily constructed *buildings* towards the wealthy tree lined avenues of Clifton and Defence districts" (Shackle 3). Here amid the luxury of marbled

floors, lawned gardens and coral trees, which decorate Shackle's home, residents, are insulated from the complicated topography of ethnicized neighbourhoods, gangs and mafias fattened by extortion and unique regimes of terror (Nicholas 3).

As Shackle mentions it about her own experience that she "was used to experiencing Karachi through windows of a car" (Shackle 57), however, by listening to the most intimate accounts of everyday lives of some characters in the ever sprawling city, she captures "the frontline of global urbanization at its most unforgiving (Shackle 56)."

De Certeau and several other urbanists are of the view that if the city which is akin to a complex text, is read as through a map or as a grid from the highest point, like in case of New York from WTC or Dubai from Burj Khalifa, from where it (the city) seems readable and comprehensible. However, the real city exists at the level of street in the daily practices of its inhabitants. In their opinion, at this level the city becomes invisible, opaque, unreadable and unpredictable. It is because of this invisibility and opaqueness, that the resistance to dominance becomes possible. In that perspective, *Karachi Vice* has a contradictory role to play. While on one hand it somehow represents the unrepresentable, at the same time like any other representation of the sub-altern it insinuates at the invisibility of the slum subaltern in the scheme of the modern city and the way these slum dwellers negotiate this invisibility and produce their distinct space called slum to which we associate certain traits. Although, everyday life can never become completely readable and transparent, but it is the only way of knowing the real city, instead of an illusion of readability of the city from maps and grid like visions of the city.

According to Lyn Stewart the way Lefebvre conceptualizes the three moments, physical, mental and social, it leads us to understand and establish their relationship to power. For instance the conceived space or representation of space is a formal, technical, and rational way of producing space through formally trained institutional modes, ensuring readability. These readable maps and grid like representations of space, according to Lefebvre, gives an illusion of spaces as innocent, transparent and thus unproblematic. Seemingly depthless and self-evident, transparent space "evades both history and practice" (Lefebvre 7) and deceptively hides the truth of struggles and conflicts underneath these apparently innocent surfaces (Stewart 3)

Lived spaces or spaces of representation are on the other hand results of more informal, local and socially specific practices. It is the level at which the city cannot be read in the forms of maps and master plans. These practices are often historically and

geographically contingent. These spaces are sites of resistance and counter discourses which are not easily grasped by the apparatuses of power, or which “refuse to acknowledge power” (Lefebvre 10). Shackle in her stories zooms in to these informal spaces produced by the underclasses, their struggles and the visual culture of these spaces.

4:3 Production of Informal Spaces and Spatial politics in *Karachi Vice*

The conflict between the state controlled dominant abstract space and the lived spaces of everyday life by ordinary people constitutes the **spatial politics** of dominance and appropriation in the urban context. The abstract space is not just a result of capitalist relations of production but also a **political product** of repressive and administrative control of the state, a product of relations of dominance and strategy decided at the summit of state.

This thesis attempts to analysis certain ramifications of this politics and conflict. On one hand the dominant abstract space results in the disenfranchisement of people of the city of their basic rights of respectable housing and basic amenities of life and on the other hand as a homogenizing strategy it tends to obliterate the visual culture of the urban subaltern both on ground as well as from the spatial discourse. Here our central concern is the informal spaces like slums as the differential spaces created by the dis-empowered underclasses of a city bereft of any welfare arrangements for its citizens. They are victims of double jeopardy of local government neglect as well as of a global economic system driven by accumulation of profit.

Lefebvre, for the most part celebrates these spaces, as spaces of agency, freedom, diversity, nature, creativity and political change. In his visit to Brazil, he sees hope in informal agential practices of Favelas. Also in his book *Right to the City*, he envisions the city as an oeuvre, an artwork, which in his opinion should be a result of creativity of its inhabitants. He idealises a stateless society where the inhabitants have the right to create the city. His theorisations incline towards Eurocentric view of differential spaces. Lefebvre in his discussions of differential spaces does talk about the threats faced by these places, but he ignores the real living conditions of these people. This thesis, while recognizing the agency and political potential of these spaces, also sheds light on the real life perilous conditions of lives of slum dwellers. Starting from housing issue, I discuss other hazards of their lives in the segment *Agency vs survivalism*, discussing the dual

nature of informal practices of urban subaltern, instead of reducing the nature of these practices to any one aspect of either agency or complete helplessness.

Most of these places where Shackle's characters unfold are informal settlements. Many of them date back to the time when refugees poured in Karachi in large numbers and were not accommodated in proper homes, giving rise to organic mushrooming of Muhajir settlements. They built their homes wherever they found the place. Afterwards this self-help housing continued when migrant workers from all over Pakistan kept coming to the city in search of livelihood. For example in this compilation of stories, there is a character of a Pashtun ambulance driver, who is settled in Landhi; an industrial area. His father migrated from a remote village of Kpk where "land was fertile and green but the village was remote and the work opportunities were far and few between" (Shackle 69). In Landhi which was an industrial area where "they made their houses where the trucks stopped" (Shackle 82).....they lived in the shadows of oil tankers in makeshift houses sandwiched between a truck stop and loading pay" (Shackle 69). As the description makes it quite obvious that it is an unplanned settlement and the place where they have built their houses is not even a proper residential area but a truck stop.

The phenomenon of spatial informality in urban centres is often linked to expansion of cities because of industrialization which was accompanied by rural-urban migrations. Abram's *Man's Struggle for Shelter in an Urbanizing World (1964)* was one of the earliest inquiries on the issues and concerns related to rapid urbanization which he called "urban explosion" especially the predicament of housing and shelter. In many countries the speed of this explosion was not met with an equal speed of economic development. Governments were either unable or unwilling to provide housing and civic amenities.

Often when poor migrants are unable to buy land in formal sector these people then resort to the way of self- help housing which involves acquiring land, constructing houses and getting basic needs through informal means (Jayne, Wards 187). According to Jayne and Wards informality is not just an urban condition but it helps us to explain and critique many urban processes and politics at the urban and global level. Seeing Lefebvre's *spatial triad* as three different levels or scales of production of space we can interpret the *Conceived Space or Representation of Space* as the global or state level. Conceived space is the space of planners, architects and the state who conceptualize the urban space following the capitalist neoliberal rationality, which is also termed as the dominant abstract space by Lefebvre. The logic of neo-liberal capitalism at the global

level has led to commodification or financialization of land resulting in unequal development and shortage of housing in cities which is a valid explanation for squatting as a response to housing need.

4:3:1 Abstract Space and State Responsibility

Neoliberal rationality of capital resists any limitation to market and capital by the state. As Foucault (2008) argued in his famous lecture on neo liberal governmentality at the College de France that while there was a concept of monitoring and regulating the market by the state in classical liberalism, the neo liberalism itself has become the organizing force driving the state (Lemke 2001). This means that the neo liberal ethos were to infiltrate and dominate all aspects of life, society and its governance (Rossi 229).

Lefebvre criticizes the modern state which only serves the purpose of capital growth and uses administrative and repressive measures to produce abstract space and strives to dominate the space of everyday space (Lefebvre 214). Neoliberalism, which was earlier only an economic philosophy professed by a group of intellectual elites has now evolved into a value system which has unquestionably seeped deep into the way the state copes with different issues it faces, learning from and reinforcing each other. Finally it consolidated itself into an art of government coping with an increasing number of social issues. Cities have become experimental grounds for neoliberal ethos (Rossi 234). While neoliberalism learns from and is reinforced by urbanization, cities learn from neoliberalism resulting in the commodification of every aspect of life. Growth imperative was always an important driver of urbanization within the capitalist paradigm of production yet it was the neoliberal phase of capitalism which took the form of ideological framework for governance. The focus of national policies shifted towards profit from wealth redistribution and social welfare. In an increasingly consumerist milieu a process of commodification is triggered which takes within its fold a number of social domains, which were under public control at the time of welfare capitalism , such as healthcare, transportation , education and housing. The urban citizens are now not just customers of shops but also of hospitals and schools. Large cities have become key sites of this multifaceted commodification. In this book Siraj the ambulance driver drives the Edhi Ambulance, about which Shackle elucidates that “There were no state ambulances, only those provided by the Edhi foundation.....It filled many of the holes left by the state, providing free or low cost services including ambulances”(Shackle70). Here we have a city with no urgency or political priority to provide basic human needs, a city which is apparently a business hub of a country, is left orphaned by its putative masters.

The city supports an environment of market competition and profit making even for amenities which it is responsible to provide to its citizens. Housing, health, education, water supply all are evaded by the state, leading to the production of the informal city.

4:3:2 Abstract Space and Forced Evictions in Karachi Vice

In addition to informal practices of self-help housing, another ramification of commodification of space is forced evictions of slums and villages. According to Lefebvre the homogenizing tendency of the abstract space, which is a result of application of universal templates (Stanek 72), is often forceful and violent. As Lefebvre claims in *Production of Space* that “abstract space is not homogeneous; it simply has homogeneity as its goal, its orientation, its ‘lens’” (Lefebvre 287). The eradication or eviction of slums and villages is a case in point, the purpose of which is to maintain a safe environment for investment depriving the citizens of their right to the city and also producing spatial segregations. In such cases segregation, fragmentation and exclusivity is a result of forced and violent homogenization. In *Karachi Vice*, Shackle portrays this reality in the story of Bahria town invading and forcefully evicting the village of Lal Bakhsh where Jannat lives.

According to Shackle most of the people she met saw Bahria town as an investment opportunity, far from gangs and terrorism and the mafias, a place of safety and all life amenities. Shackle laments how the dancing fountain of Bahria town reminded her of Jannat filling up jugs from the borehole, her arms aching when the power was off and she had to use the hand pump (Shackle 993). Shackle also notices the Eiffel Tower, a symbol of universal homogenization of space, simultaneously accentuating local spatial segregation. This is a result of the inherent contradiction of abstract space. The more it attempts to enforce homogenization of space, the more it leads to fragmentation and segregation. Shackle does not eschew from describing how Jannat at first thought that hospitals and schools in Bahria town will improve things for the village people as well. However, once when she oversaw the now big and expansive town from over the bridge she did not fail to notice the gate, the walls and the security barricades, where the security guards stopped cars and charged the entrance toll tax.. “Jannat took it all in. As she stared at the gate, her hopes collapse. That gate was there for a reason to keep people like her out of that place” (Shackle 873).

In addition to infringement to basic right of citizens to shelter, such forced evictions lead to gentrification of diverse cultural space, engulfing towns and villages with long histories of living together forming local diverse cultures rooted in time these

people have spent in those spaces. As **Lefebvre** argues that the spatial planning which is political in nature tends to destroy and conquer representational spaces of lived experience which are often spontaneous, diverse and symbolic (51). The hierarchical character of abstract space can also be discussed here. According to this hierarchical ordering of space, as the town historically overtook the countryside and sharpened its domination and exploitation of it, the urban space became a giant and ‘terrifying abstraction, or ‘abstraction in action’ (Lefebvre 17). Villages also stand up for natural habitat for both men and other life forms and the abstract space conquers and brutally transforms nature through strategic uses of technology.

4:4 Political potential of Informal Spaces; Agency vs Survivalism in *Karachi Vice*

Informal practices in cities can be seen as activities which defy formal or legal laws, rules and regulations. These practices are not limited to the underprivileged sections of society but they are often considered inferior and do not have the support of state and law, unlike the powerful people who espouse illegal means of appropriating land to produce abstract space. In contrast others have viewed informalities as a cause of celebration, an example of agency and resilience of poor urban residents. Yet understanding informality leads us to reveal certain processes like its political nature and vision of a city. According to UN Habitat around 78% people live in slums in the world today.

Informal activities of these citizens are a response to denial of their basic rights. They are tactical measures to survive in an environment hostile to their very existence. Regarding the fact that whether it is an exercise of agency or mere tactics of survivalism there is debate in literature regarding the nature and scope of this agency.

According to Lombard and Meth, as they review the debates surrounding spatial informality in cities, the debate can be traced back to works on Latin *favelas* in 1960s. Then the first work they refer to is *Struggle for Shelter in an Urbanizing World (1964)*, which has been mentioned earlier in this thesis. Then they go on to explain how such places were described and characterized as “crude, simplistic and politically insignificant” (164). For instance, the people of these settlements were described as ‘urban informals’ by Abram, ‘marginals’ by Park, or even ‘human flotsam and jetsam who live like animals’ (Lyod209). Such negative stereotypes were cemented by Lewis’ s work “culture of poverty”, in which he associates negative traits or culture like violence

,drugs, dishonesty ,child and women abuse and family dysfunction to slum life. This kind of feedback and analysis supported policy solutions like prevention of migration, eviction, demolitions and eradication of such settlements. As these squatters were considered a drain on resources and were proliferating culture of poverty. These policy directions triggered new debates regarding the fact that whether informality was a solution or a problem. Turner, as a result of his research on Peru in 1972, came up with the term of self- help housing to describe the process whereby the owner occupier constructs his accommodation with or without professional help. He propounded that it was a solution for lack of housing where the government has failed its responsibility because of lack of will or resources (Lombard and Meth 165). At the same time Perlman on the bases of her research on *favelas* of Mexico reached the conclusion that the ‘myth of marginality’ is a false notion based on wrong assumptions about the slum dwellers. In her research she found out that slum dwellers are like bourgeoisie in their aspirations for their children’s education and housing, economically hardworking, and politically neither apathetic nor radical. What they do not have is the opportunities to fulfil their aspirations (Perlman 242-3). Such arguments in support of agency and capabilities of slum dwellers convinced the policy makers to follow up gradation and improvement instead of eradication and that self- help was a solution and not a problem (Davis 40).

However, critics like Moser and Peake suggested that ‘ self-help’ releases government from its responsibility to provide adequate housing as a basic need for its low- income population and is a way of exploitation of labour at work and housing(5). Therefore self-help arguably started an era of privatization of housing, supported by the World bank. This idea got a new lease of life when the Peruvian economist Hernando De Soto gave the solution that one solution to informality is to legalize it and include these people in the process of wealth creation.

This debate can be better grasped by looking into Rakowsky’s suggestion where he divides this debate into two tendencies, designated as ‘structuralists’ and ‘legalists’. In structuralists view informality is part of urban crises which is a result of capitalist urbanism while the legalists see it as alternative and even **heroic** economic survival strategy (Lombard and Meth 166).

Recent debates have reframed informality in **Postcolonial context**, which can be bracketed with the ‘**heroic stance**’ of earlier theorists. It foregrounds agency of the population who are labelled as marginalized. This agency has been described as ‘Subaltern Urbanism’ by Roy. Other terms like ‘Quite Encroachment’ by Bayat ,

‘Occupancy Urbanism’ by Benjamin, ‘Fluidity’ by Simone and Yiftchal’s ‘Grey Spaces’ emphasizes the agency of citizens as something integral to what we call urbanism (Lombard and Meth 167). Roy’s conceptualization in this regard is instrumental as she describes informality as ‘an organizing logic’, a system of norms that governs the process of urban transformation itself rejects informality as a separate sector and sees it as a series of transactions that connect different economies and spaces to one another (Roy 148).

Samira Shackle’s *Karachi Vice* is replete with tales of **heroic resilience and exercise of agency** in the face of impending threat of **crime, party bullying, violence, evictions and lack of basic amenities**. **Safdar** is an ambulance driver who reaches to the nooks and corners of alleys ridden with gang war and target killings. At any point of time he himself can become victim of a nameless bullet. Yet he dauntlessly collects dead bodies thrown wayward in the streets. In the absence of any state service, he along with other Edhi drivers picks and drops people who are sick to hospitals. It is not just housing itself where the idea of “self-help” is seen in practice but the idea is also manifested in the provision of social services.

Parveen is another heroic figure of courage in the slum of Liari. She is a Baloch woman, who got enamoured with literature of Karl Marx, which she received from her mamoo. It broadened her already enlightened mind to become a grass root activist. Her activism materialized in the form of a street school and later on street theatre. She harboured feminist ideas about the underprivileged condition of women of her locality and exhorted them to raise their voices against domestic violence. She took herself into the homes of her students, arguing that a girl should not be pulled out of school to get married before she finished her education or that a son should not be sent to work before he had passed his exams (Shackle 155). As a young teenager, Parveen had been disgusted by the garbage that gathered on the streets. She managed to convince a group of girls from her college to join her in a street clean-up mission going out with brooms and sacks to collect the discarded debris (*Karachi Vice* 156). Amidst ubiquitous violence and a constant sense of threat she kept running the school until almost it became impossible and life threatening to continue. Through Parveen’s eyes and person, Shackle displays the milieu of fear and deprivation in a locality simultaneously struggling and grappling with poverty and government neglect.

Another hero is **Siraj** who is running Technical and Training Resource Centre (TTRC) and is a map maker. He along with **Sahiba**, another woman activist working on Orangi pilot project and Kachi Abadi project, worked to map and document issues related

to water and land in order to regularize these informal settlements. They strove hard to map and regularize these kachi abadis to secure them from developers and builder mafias. Once the areas were legally recognized, they were protected to some extent from being forced off their land, either because property developers decided to stay away or because, armed with official leases, locals could command much higher rates if they decided to sell. The map had other uses too. People could use them to lay down sewage lines or demand electricity connections. Orangi pilot project was research project on water supply and distribution which aimed to investigate that why water which is available in tankers is not available in pipes. Sahiba and Siraj, they spoke to everyone, from local elders to water board employees and drivers of tankers .From this rigorous research they found out that land and water were valuable criminal currencies controlled and siphoned away by mafias in collusion with the state (Shackle 721). They never published the full report as it could be life threatening to them. The report would not only expose the local criminal elements but also the government officials who are an equal accomplice in the crime. She constantly got death threats from criminal wings of political parties but she persevered with the project (Shackle 721).

The struggle of people of the village Lal Bakhsh Goth against Bahria Town is also heroic. They fought physically as well as legally against the illegal encroachment of their ancestral land, houses and poultry farms. It was their land and they took a vouch to never give it up to Bahria town; “we will not sell a single inch of our land and we will not surrender. If we have to die defending it, we will die. We will not give them our land” (Shackle 895). One day when their bulldozers along with police cars came crashing to raze their houses to ground, the people of Lal Bakhsh waged a brave war against the invaders by throwing stones at them, forcing them to pull back and drove away.

Though such conceptualizations of heroic agency and quite encroachment have the potential to alter power relations but such framings and theorization tend towards ‘over-abstraction’ of slums as a concept , treating it more in terms of theorization than reality. It eludes the real living conditions of these settlements or the ‘real material challenges of informality and associated politics as it describes the everyday lives of millions of people .

In addition to these narratives of **heroic agency**, Shackle does not forget to unveil the **harsh living** conditions of these kachi abadis. These descriptions of uncondusive conditions can aid us into analysing the kind of space being produced as a result of informal practices of citizens. Though Lefebvre glorifies and celebrates agency of

inhabitants to create lived spaces based on use value and see potential of revolutionary change in these appropriative practices or tend to over romanticize them as differential spaces, envisioning a stateless, classless, self-created and self-governed heaven. However, Lefebvre does not elucidate the pathway of achieving this ideal. Is it through violent revolution or evolutionary appropriation of spaces? While he remains ambiguous about the process or roadmap to such a change, his celebration of spatial appropriations by dwellers of Favelas of Brazil indicates that he idealises these spaces of freedom and resistance to the dominant conceived spaces. In case of appropriative practices of underclasses, the change cannot be completely denied; it does produce in de Certeau's words a tactical space of resistance. Yet one has to glimpse into the kind of space produced in case of informal settlements, to see the actual living conditions of these places and the extent of change that can be speculated. These harsh material realities do expose the fact how poverty and marginalisation of the urban subaltern is perpetuated in these spaces. Moreover the rise of gangs and mafias among these slums is an evidence of the fact that a stateless society does not necessarily mean a society without hierarchy of power. Although there is much that is wrong with the functioning of the modern state and its compliance with the corporate forces, but a fruitful struggle would be more directed towards a welfare state rather than a dream of a stateless society.

For instance Shackle describes Orangi as an unplanned settlement, where waves of migrants to the city had simply built their homes with no regulations or support, and an absence of amenities. This meant it was **not connected to main water, electricity or gas supplies**. Describing the situation, Shackle writes, "At night, the residents created improvised lamps out of used glass bottles, filling them with kerosene oil with a piece of jute in it. The pungent oily smell rose over the area as night fell. The lamps gave the new homes a warm glow, but they were hazardous: once, Siraj's mother knocked one over and the hot kerosene splattered across her arm, permanently scaring her" (Shackle 268).

Similarly, the **disposing of human waste** was an ever present challenge and a cause of anxiety for the adults. In the absence of central systems, some people had concrete sewage tanks underneath their houses. A municipal truck came and emptied it once a month, for a cost of twenty five rupees, the acrid stench filling the air. Others had tanks with permeable walls that allowed the waste to seep into the earth around it. Still others used the bucket system, where people relieved themselves into a pot that could then be passed through the bathroom to a ledge outside. Every day, someone would empty all the pots in that area. Once the guy who collected this waste demanded high rate

which people refused to pay. He decided to take a day off to show them how much they needed him. The area became a mess. Flies buzzed over the slowly baking faecal matter, the smell overwhelming the senses. The residents soon agreed to pay the higher rate (Shackle 268)

Persistent **violence**, criminal activities, lawlessness and politically motivated gang war is another malignant material condition prevalent in these slum areas. Shackle's stories are set in a scenario where gang wars were at their peak impacting daily lives and producing spaces of fear, insecurity and anxiety. Street crimes and gang wars can be seen as an outcome phenomenon of informal spatial practices. These settlements often because of their unregulated status, poverty, joblessness, and government neglect become safe houses of criminal elements. Taking perspective from Lefebvre's spatial triad this can be argued that informal settlements are conceived as spaces which are beyond the orbit of regulated city areas. Additionally, the spaces of these areas are conceived as congested and chaotic both by the criminals as well as the police making them conducive to criminal activities. As Mark Titus in his article 'A Hotbed for Crime' quotes police as saying that congested, complicated squatter communities are a breeding ground for criminals (Titus n.p).

Arif Hassan claims that Karachi violence is a reflection of global crisis. The reasons and patterns of urban violence and turmoil of Karachi are similar to the ones found in mega cities of developing countries around the world. Frequent migrations cause ethnic conflicts but more than that poor public administration, mismanagement of resources, corrupt officials, lack of basic amenities and the alienated youth who is deprived of stakes and participation in the urban mainstream are the main triggers of violence (1).

Arif Hassan further explains the mind set of second generation migrant by arguing that unlike their parents they look for stake in running of the city and feel entitled to a say and participation in local politics and administration. They are often educated but unemployed and often feel excluded from decision making process which they think is controlled by the elite of society. This leads to a youth who is alienated, disillusioned and disempowered. In Hassan's opinion the efforts of these young men to become part of mainstream political process is often thwarted. It is this strategic control over political and administrative process which leads the alienated youth of slums to violence and crime. They often become pawns in the hands of gangs which are either controlled by criminal wings of political parties, drug dealers or different other mafias. Furthermore, poor living

conditions and ethnic tensions over land and resources are also sources of rampant crime and violence. Gangstrism in such locality thus often appears as or seems like a tactical measure by the underclasses against a strategically controlled urban space by the power holders, which often leaves the slum youth disenfranchised and thereby easily exploited for violent activities.

It can be argued that these tactical measures also lead to embodied appropriations in a lefebvrian sense, producing a space which follows the logic of violence and fear. However, these are not idealized differential spaces of symbolic resistance against hegemonic forces. For instance Shackle describes an altered spatial condition in the wake of a violent wave striking the streets of lyari which became a space of anxiety and insecurity in place of an earlier described area of bustling activity. She vividly portrays this change in following words, “.....the drumbeat of gunshots ricocheted around the narrow alleys, occasionally punctuated by the sound of distant voices shouting instructions or howling of pain. The streets were empty. Women chopped their vegetables inside, alone. The chai hotels were shuttered. The usual background noise of motorbikes revving and rickshaw engines chugging fell full silent. There were no donkey carts selling fresh vegetables, no jingles from the snack sellers, no voices echoing around the streets. Occasionally, when Parveen peeped through the metal grilles that protected the insides of the windows in their house, she would see figures of men darting between buildings, their bodies sometimes flattened against the wall to evade detection. She would see flash of a gun or a small cloud of dust from a bullet or a fast-moving foot. But she didn't look out there too much. If you were spotted opening your gate to peer out, it might be seen as provocation (Shackle 203).

Thus, violence leads to an embodied production of particular kind of spaces which are outcomes of human actions and activities. However, as we know that not all violence is perpetrated by the weak against the strong and vice versa. Similarly, In case of gang violence in slum streets, the warring factions are often the poor themselves who are being strategically exploited by the powerful entities. Here the tactics and appropriations are not against the strong by the subaltern or the marginalized. Just like the self-help housing these activities hide behind the veneer of resilience and resistance, the dark truth of exploitation by the state and political parties. These densely populated areas with acute problems and issues of lack of basic services are often nothing more than potential vote banks for the political parties and cheap labour for the capitalists and industrialists. Self-help thus is more of a survivalist way of life than actually producing any substantial

change in the system. It rather helps perpetuate the exploitative regimes of state and finance. In this case of gang violence, gangstrism can be discussed as a tactic that has the tendency to morph into strategy. Gangs often follow hierarchical configurations like strategic organizations. This dual character of gang violence dilutes the sharp edges of de Certeau's binary of tactic and strategy. In the urban context such violence produces lived spaces both as a strategy as well a tactic. Common citizens negotiate space in such way that they use tactics to survive violence, in turn producing space through their bodies. Inhabitants with their minds and bodies infiltrate the city text to write their own version of city. On the scale of quotidian and miniscule, they bring innovation and improvisation to the use of city spaces, manipulating them to their necessities, desires and goals, producing that dimension of the city which is unquantifiable, unreadable and which cannot be known through data and stats. Their individual and personal consumption of city spaces create this opaque reality where they insinuate their countless differences in the dominant text (Khan 12).

For instance in *Karachi Vice*, Safdar the ambulance driver, as Shackle writes that though Karachi was his city where he had spent his childhood, still when he started driving the ambulance, he came to know the real geography of the city. Not the one shown by the Google map of the city but the metaphorical city, the one created through the lived reality of its dwellers, under the influence of socio-political conditions of violence and poverty. She writes, "The knot of streets he was driving through had appeared to him like a tangled ball of wool; incomprehensible. At first he felt a twinge of anxiety when he had to go into any unfamiliar area, particularly those whose names he recognized from the news. Lyari, Malir, Kiamari- all were known for gangs, drugs and violence. It was not just that he didn't know the streets themselves- where to turn left or right- but that he didn't know the dynamics that operated there. Perhaps this was how his parents had felt, moving into the battleground without any understanding of where the real danger lay. Over the months, the tangled ball of wool unknotted into neat strands, as Safdar developed an understanding not only of how the highways, streets and weaving back alleys **connected**, but also of people's loyalties and where the risks were" (Shackle 126).

Safdar believed that God intended him to do this work. Every day he with his ambulance drove these streets to collect the dead and injured. His family was worried for his life and insisted that he leaves the job, which he refused to do at any cost (*Karachi Vice* 126). He through tactical use of city spaces was weaving his own story into the

city's complex fabric. Like Lefebvre, de Certeau also does see these tactical spaces as spaces of empowerment and agency for the city margins. These tactics, according to him are of unlimited diversity. Just like driving these streets, de Certeau gives example of walking. Pedestrians through the act of walking the city they alter and appropriate space. About which he states that, "walkers follow the thick and thin of the urban text they write without being able to read it.....making use of the spaces that cannot be seen" (de Certeau 92). This tactical space of walkers is similar to the 'Lived differential Space' of Lefebvre different from dominant spaces conceived by planners, architects, states and other such powerful and somehow organized elements.

Though unlike Lefebvre, de Certeau does not see a complete takeover of the system in place, however he does speculate a certain amount of empowerment residing in the person of the common inhabitant in becoming a part of the chorus that is the city, singing his own song. This empowerment does exist to the extent of helping the citizen to survive and make headway in life and in the process participating in the making of the city, an extension of his own imaginary of the city. Yet this power is conditioned and circumscribed by the circumstances it finds itself in. Lived space or the tactical city is created under the shadows of the conceived and perceived space and is limited in its potential of producing substantial change or overturning of structures of dominance.

Certeau argues that "tactical space is the space of the other" (37). de Certeau sees strategy as structured by postulation of power, by groups in power, while tactics are determined by an absence of power (38). A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions and secure independence with respect to circumstances.

According to de Certeau the proper is a victory of space over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time; it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized on the wing. Whatever it wins, it does not keep (de Certeau20). As it happens in Shackle's Karachi vice that all the street activities like street schools, hawkers, vending, children playing and men and women gossiping, all of this came to a halt in the wake of rising violence. Likewise all these transient occupations of space got resumed in the aftermath of rangers operation against the warring gangs.

Certeau further argues that a tactic must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into opportunity. The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien

to them. This is achieved however in the propitious moments when they are able to combine heterogeneous elements; the intellectual synthesis of these given elements takes the form of, however, not of discourse, but of the decision itself, the act and manner in which the opportunity is seized (20). In the light of de Certeau's arguments one can imply that these practices might not change the discourse altogether but they do have the potential to lessen the gap between practice and the discourse. While Lefebvre inclines towards a romantic vision of a stateless and classless society through such practices, that might be a farfetched idea though, but these self-help steps or make do urbanism in combination with legal and political struggles seems to be progressive trajectory towards attaining right to the city and a welfare state. Moreover, Lefebvre is ambiguous and unclear about the mechanism of a stateless society, which further reduces his conceptualizations to idealistic reflections on a post-revolution society.

Shackle's tales are full of instances of ordinary people seizing on such opportunities and turning to their own ends forces alien to them. **Perween Rehman**, the director of Orangi pilot project, told Siraj, another young common resident of orange, that she with the help of local people laid sewage lines, gathered small amounts of money from the community to get the funds together instead of waiting for money or permission from the government. She told him that OPP provided the technical information- the angle of incline necessary to make the sewage flow downhill-but the street-by-street digging was done by people themselves. '*Chota am, burra kam,*' she repeated, a phrase meaning 'The little man can achieve big things.' The best projects she said involved bringing in members of the community (*Karachi Vice* 268).

However because of party dictatorship and violence all this work was not easy to carry out without having the fear of being killed. Orangi was a stronghold of a party which worked like an armed militia working its acts through target killings and violent intimidation. Yet, as Shackle points out, "the people of Orangi Town all had their ways of working around the constraints imposed by the party, which had eyes and ears everywhere"(Shackle 268).

In the streets around the MQM's offices, foot soldiers stood guard – often boys who had dropped out of school in pursuit of glory. In these more sensitive areas, getting a measuring tape out to map an area was unthinkable, since it looked highly suspicious. Perween Rehman had always told Siraj to think flexibly. If he couldn't use his usual tools, he could still get an approximate idea of the size of a house or street by measuring his own stride and counting the number of steps it took to go past. So as the Party's iron

grip tightened, that was what Siraj did (Shackle 296). Siraj, however, was well aware of limitations of the work they were doing. Water was still a rare commodity, for days they had to wait for its steady flow, and often when it came, the electricity would go off. The party was still intimidating people and harassing them on the basis of party affiliations. The party even superseded religion in that locality. They could bring a mosque building down to serve their interest or threaten people to give them goat skin after the ritual of sacrifice on Eid. They could start firing on a bus entering the area if its driver is from the rival ethnicity. They had successfully created a cordoned off enclave where only they could decide people's mobility.

Here, the question regarding the scope of appropriations and tactics can be dealt with. Certainly, their importance cannot be undermined in producing changes over time, depending upon the frequency and duration of their persistence. However, their long term success still depends upon the acceptance they can procure from the stronger strategic powers. They can only do as much as they are allowed to do.

The recent scholarship has turned its attention from the narrative of agency, survival, resilience and resourcefulness of the poor to the limits of resources available to them, and the suffering they incur in the wake of neoliberal restructuring of economy and society. In their opinion the creativity and adaptive capacity of the poor is not enough to neutralize the impacts of these devastating structural transformations. The emphasis on resilience fails to recognize the suffering which is a fundamental fact of poverty, turning a blind eye to their miseries, scant resources, and the meagre conditions of their existence. These conditions of cumulative deprivation go on to perpetuate poverty instead of amelioration.

4:5 Unlearning the City and Spatial appropriations by the Urban Poor in *Karachi Vice*

Integral to the concept of differential space is a kind of diversity of social space which the homogenizing logic of global neoliberalism endeavours to eliminate. There are many spatial distinctions which Lefebvre points out but specifically he focuses on the distinctions which originate in the body (sex, ethnicity, class) and the political potential of this differential embodiment. In his spatial triad it is the concept of lived space which deals with issues related to subjectivity, embodied appropriation and space. It is at this level that difference is formed through lived practice and sedimentations of experience,

challenging the dominant homogenizing logic, threatening to unravel its ideology and produce space otherwise (Lefebvre 391).

Here, it is deemed appropriate to mention Swati Chattapadhoy's work *Unlearning the City*. The purpose of her work, in her own words is to articulate a theoretical approach that does not succumb to the dominant context and metropolitan modes of producing meaning that privilege the conventional cosmopolitanism (Chattapadhoy 17). In the urban context, this would attempt to describe and theorize the visual culture of the marginalized.

Chattapadhoy employs the term infrastructure for the physical or materiality of the city and by reflecting and focusing on the street culture of the urban subaltern, she seeks to look at this infrastructure in a new optical field. It is a theorization that seeks to look beyond the disembodied view of this infrastructure and engender a subaltern perspective into the city discourse (Chattopadhyay 17). For instance by giving an example of street cricket she explains how an activity however temporarily can transform the street from a space of passage and communication to one of habitation, entertainment and play. Other examples which she delineates in her work are of wall writings, vehicle art and religious processions on the roads.

These aspects of urban life which are integral to the city making by the peripheral groups of society especially in cities of the south, do not find a place in the globalized post fordist market driven vision of a modern city, which should be well planned, well designed and orderly in a certain homogenized fashion.

Shackle while in most of her work is preoccupied with the stereotypical image of Lyari and Orangi as spaces of violence and strife, but as a true representative of these places, this work goes way beyond these issues, highlighting the resilient and innovative spirit of its inhabitants. In the absence of adequate educational facilities, Parveen improvises the street space as a school for children of her area. Later on she with the help of other young people of her vicinity starts doing street theatre for educative and awareness purposes. The reasons for such improvisations of street spaces are no doubt embedded in poverty and lack of urban planning, however, it is these creative usages of city spaces which endow them their unique cultural identity and individuality.

Chattopadhyay aims to rethink the street as a space of habitation, of ephemeral performance and experience, rather than mere usage. Shackle also notices that despite the neglect and dilapidation, there was still life in the streets. "Each alley was a hive of activity. Hole in the wall shops....Men walked with donkey carts selling vegetables...carts selling snacks gol gappas. Parveen learned politics from men sitting

outside chai hotels...playing boards' games while drinking cups of steaming chai. The unspoken rule of these gatherings was that everyone should have read news so that they could analyse it together. Shouting to be heard the old men would interpret what prime minister has to saythey would often argue about Baloch nationalism" (Shackle 171). Women of the locality also used the streets as extensions of their houses. The demarcations between house and the street , inside and the outside are often not so strict in such neighbourhoods, as houses themselves are very small , close to each other and do not have open spaces like a courtyard , veranda or a lawn. Shackle highlights the scene of such an activity outside Parveen's house and writes, "Just outside her house in the narrow alley women laid out their rugs to sit on. Some smoked hookah....others chopped garlic, tomatoes....the smell of freshly cut herbs permeated the hanging miasma of stagnant water and decaying food scrapes" (Shackle 172). This leads us back to the concept of *lived space* in Lefebvre's spatial triad, which is a combination of spatial practices, conceived space and the force of human subjectivity and imagination. A place which "imagination seeks to appropriate". This imaginative appropriation of urban spaces, according to Chattopadhyay, creates the need to place these spaces in new optical field and be redefined.

4:6 Conclusion

It can be concluded here that the production of informal space by the urban proletariat (Lived/appropriated differential space) cannot be seen independent of conceived abstract space, which emerges out of neoliberal economic policies which are then enforced by the state through control and administration of space. This process of production is political in nature as it involves assertion and resistance to power. This thesis recognizes the agential aspect of these appropriative practices as well as their potential in producing spaces of diverse/differential nature. However it also foregrounds the harsh realities and pragmatic challenges faced by these practices, especially in slums. Also, in spite of a continual challenges and threats, the struggle (political, legal, agitational) must continue for a welfare state. This can be a more pragmatic itinerary to follow instead of the rather romantic idea of revolution. Revolutionary movements are either violently suppressed by the state power or often results in fascist and dictatorial take over.

CHAPTER 5

SPACES OF CONTESTATION AND INFORMAL PRACTICES IN *A FINE BALANCE* BY ROHINTON MISTRY

5:1 Introduction and a Brief Summary of *A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry

The second novel which I have chosen for analysis is *The Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry. The novel is set in a city which the author calls by the name of ‘the city by the sea’, which can conveniently be assumed as the city of Mumbai. Nonetheless, as the author himself has evaded an explicit mention of any specific city, perhaps for the sake of retaining the fictional character of the novel, therefore I have also not included the historical and other factual details of the city.

The story starts from and mainly centres on the two characters, Ishvar and Omprakash, who are related to each other as uncle and nephew respectively. They belong to the low caste Hindus and migrate to the city after all their family members are killed by the upper cast landlord, the reason being their choice of tailoring profession instead of their ancestral profession of collecting garbage. As they migrate to the city, they find work as tailors at Dina’s flat and residence in a nearby slum.

5:2 Production of Informal Spaces and Spatial Politics of Dominance and Appropriation in *A Fine Balance*

Much of the novel revolves around struggles of these characters to find place for work and residence. The novel unravels the socially produced unjust geographies, and how as Lefebvre theorises that the space is used to control, dominate and exploit others (Soja 3). Lefebvre’s critical spatial perspective is instrumental in describing the constructed and consequently the discursive nature of urban space, making it a powerful tool of oppression and dominance in the hands of the powerful.

As discussed earlier in the discussion of Shackle’s *Karachi Vice*, that as a result of neoliberal restructuring of economy and the urban, informal practices of the underclasses and slum habitats are common sights in megacities. Although they are a global phenomenon and can almost be found in all big cities of North and South. However, in cities of South poverty and ‘poverty places’ are much more conspicuous and ubiquitous, owing to a greater state neglect and overall underdeveloped state of economy. No

amount of gentrification can confound and obscure the views of world's largest slums or chawls like Dharavi (Mumbai) and Orangi (Karachi). According to Lefebvre, "Thus, despite – or rather because of –its negativity, the abstract space carries within itself the seeds of a new kind of space. I shall call that new space, "differential space", because in as much as abstract space tends towards homogenization, a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates difference" (52).

The urban subaltern deprived of resources to resort to the formal use of urban space, exploit this space in informal ways, producing lived spaces of embodied difference. Lefebvre refers to these as spaces of 'here and now' contestation and 'bodily re-appropriation' of city space as vast counter space that escapes the control of the established order (383).

As we have discussed earlier that Lefebvre tends to celebrate these spaces as spaces of agency, diversity, creativity and resistance. Acknowledging all these possibilities and potentials in production of space, assertion of agency, resistance and reclamation to right to the city, this thesis however asserts that the scope and extent of these possibilities is conjectural. Moreover, unlike Lefebvre, this thesis does not circumvent the exposition of debilitating aspects of such spaces, especially for the urban poor. As for this novel, for the most part Mistry does not romanticize these spaces produced by the urban poor and most descriptions are dystopian in nature, yet these descriptions make present a version of the city space which is absent in the dominant discourse of urban planning. There are unseemly mentions of people defecating and committing suicide on railway tracks, sleeping and dwelling on pavements and platforms. These are sights which on one hand are a picture of how the marginalized exert their agency in occupying and encroaching the city according to their requirements and at the same time it exposes how these spaces further marginalize constantly pushing them to periphery. Both these aspects of the urban subaltern practices are a concern of this thesis and are discussed as such.

5:3 Agency vs survivalism in *A Fine Balance*

As for the political agency, Asef Bayat argues that the dispossessed and the deinstitutionalized subaltern crafts a street politics best understood as the 'quite encroachment of the ordinary' (533). According to him, this informal life is typified by flexibility, pragmatism, negotiation as well as constant struggle for survival and self – development and he calls it the 'habitus of the dispossessed' (573). Mistry when talking

about pavement dwellers or those living at the platforms, refers to these places as their possessions just like a private property for work or residential purposes. Mistry refers to the location on pavement where the beggar Shankar sleeps as ‘Shankar’s pavement’ (Mistry 473). The beggar master talks about making improvements to ‘his pavement’ by providing him cushions (Mistry 535).

This description of city’s public spaces as private spaces invokes the need to reconsider the concept of the city. Lefebvre argues that city is not a neutral container but a social construct. The city or the urban is not an empirical object or a fixed entity but an on-going process continuously being produced as a result of heterogeneous spatio-temporal forms embedded in different kinds of social actions. According to Harvey it is only through this understanding of the urban spaces that we can consider the agency of the excluded and the marginalized others, the ones that can never be entirely controlled, and all sorts of liberatory and emancipatory possibilities they can produce (63).

Mistry’s description of a portion of the pavement as quasi property of Shankar can be further explained through a conceptualization of the urban space as ‘concrete contradiction’ where “anything can become a home , a place of convergence, a privileged site, to the extent that every urban space bear within it this possible-impossible, its own negation. Without the lens of homogenizing lens of industrial rationality, it appears as differential, each place and each moment existing only within a whole, through the contrasts and oppositions that connect it to, and distinguish it from , other places and moments .

5:3:1 Agential Power Threatened by State and Law in *A Fine Balance*

Lefebvre in his discussions does foreground the constant threat faced by the differential spaces from state and its institutions, all abetting the capitalist logic. However, it leaves out the discussion on the harsh living conditions which are produced as a result of these challenges. These repressive measures limit their potential to ameliorate their conditions and further marginalize them. As discussed earlier in the analysis of first novel that globalized neoliberalism diffuses a certain ideology and practical approach to urban governance and public spaces. It involves a shift from a social welfare based economy to one characterized by private public partnerships, market dominance and an entrepreneurial city ethos (Owhin 4). This brings the differential space in a continual dialectical tension with the city’s regulatory code indicating the homogenizing potential which could be at work to vitiate the production of differential space (Owhin 4).

5:3:2 Bourgeoisiation of Law in *A Fine Balance*

These spaces of the marginalized where they live and earn are not recognized by the law. In this novel when Ishvar visits the Ration officer for his ration card, he gets involved in a troubled debate over his address. Pointing at the address section the officer exclaims, “What is this rubbish?” Ishvar tells him that it is the place where they lived. He enters the name of the road that led to their row of shacks on the north side. The space for building name, flat number, and street number is left blank. The Ration officer asks him about the exact address of his house. Ishvar offers additional information; the closest intersection, the streets east and west of slum, the train station, names of neighbourhood cinemas..... The Ration officer rejects all these details calling it nonsense, and pulled out a directory and studied the map. Knowing that it is a jhoparpatti he tells him that jhoparpatti is no address. Ration cards can only be issued to the ones having real addresses. Ishvar pleads that his house is real and the Ration officer can come and see it. But the Ration officer snubbs him and say that his seeing is not what matters but what matters is the law and in the eyes of the law jhopdi doesn't count (Mistry 203). The law gives preference and acceptance only to private property. Mere appropriation of land holds no status or claim to rights in the eyes of law especially in case of the weaker agents of the society.

At another occasion when Ishvar and his nephew are sleeping in the entrance of a medical store after their jhopdis are demolished by city authorities, the two are awakened by a sergeant. The sergeant orders them to get up and tells them it is against the law to sleep on the streets. “But police sahb, we are sleeping here only because your men came with machines and destroyed our jhopadpatti” says Ishvar. The sergeant retorts, “What? You lived in a jhopadpatti? Two wrongs don't make a right. You could get double punishment”. “But police-sahab, “interrupts the night watchman, “you cannot arrest them, they were not sleeping on the street, they were inside this....”. “.....Sleeping in any **non-sleeping place** is **illegal**. This is an entranceway, not a sleeping place” warns the Sergeant (Mistry 375).

Here in these events, Mistry makes it very obvious that production of differential lived spaces by the urban poor is constantly threatened by conceived abstract space through the power of state and law. D.Asher Ghertner in his article *Slum Demolitions and the New Legal Discourse*, delineates the influence of neoliberal world class aesthetics of urbanism on not just city discourse and state governance but also on the legal discourse.

Ghertner argues that it is because of **bourgeoisisation** of law and society that the rights of those who hold private property are given precedence over the slum dwellers who are labeled as ‘illegal enroachers’. He cites the example of Pitampura case- a case where petition is filed against a slum cluster in a public place near a formal residential area. In the final judgement of this case the interest of people residing in formal colonies is treated as public interest the protection of which is an urgent matter under the article 21 of the constitution. On the other hand the slums are straight off discarded as spaces of trouble and source of all kinds of social and environmental hazards and are ordered to be removed under the law of nuisance. Moreover the rights of formal residents are also given precedents because they have come first and have legal claims to land (11).

The judgement according to Ghertner divides the citizens into the private property owners and occupiers of public land. The Article 21 of ‘Right of Life’, instead of guaranteeing equal distribution of rights, was interpreted in favour of formal residents. The judgment defines slum dwellers as second category of citizens whose ‘social justice’ becomes actionable only after the fulfilment of the rights of residents of formal colonies (11).

Mistry’s *A Fine Balance* is set in an era when Indira Ghandhi’s government had imposed Emergency on India. In large Indian cities poor people were given the harsh choice between slum evictions and forced sterilizations. Mistry graphically describes the pain and anguish that these hut dwellers went through when bulldozers with the help of local police who forcefully destroyed their huts and evacuated them. Describing the scene Mistry writes that the police rallied and beat them back. People fell, were trampled, and the ambulances supplemented their siren skirls with blaring horns while children screamed, terrified at being separated from their parents (Mistry 341).

The hutment dwellers straggled back from the pulse of the assault, spent, venting their anguish in helpless outrage. “Heartless animals! For the poor there is no justice, ever! We had next to nothing, now it’s less than nothing! What is our crime, where are we to go?” (Mistry 341).

“But how can they destroy our homes, just like that?”

“They said it’s a new Emergency law. If shacks are illegal, they can remove them. The new law says the city must be made beautiful” (Mistry 342).

It was in the name of beautification of the city that these lived differential spaces of the urban poor were being displaced by the abstract homogenous space of capitalism. Ghertner in his article uses the term rule by aesthetics and bourgeoisisation of law to argue

that how progressively in so many judgements over the years the law of nuisance has been invoked instead of laws related to illegal land use. This has led to objectification and dehumanization of slums and slum dwellers. They are treated as objects to be removed and problems to be solved labelled as public nuisance by bourgeois sensibility and sanctioned by law. He cites the example of a case, in which petition was not even filed for removal of slums but was submitted ‘for better civic amenities and for nuisance caused by open wide drain’. The petition did not include any mention of slums. Only in the petition’s annexures containing letters to elected representatives and photos of the drain it revealed that a slum existed beside the drain. Nonetheless, the court, noticing the slum’s presence in the photos, ordered its demolition without inquiring into the details of the settlement’s size, location, history, or legal basis (18). Ghertner concludes that nuisance has become a discursive justification of removal of slum without identifying the violation of land use (19).

These challenges to the differential space of the poor, which are also recognised by Lefebvre, impede the potential for any substantial progressive change in the system. The continuous trap of poverty and the violence perpetrated by the state in accomplice with law, weakens the mental and physical faculties of the poor rendering them incapable of escaping this trap or overthrowing the existing set up in place. **de Certeau** who recognises the agential capacity of tactical resistance and the sense of empowerment it endows to the consumers of power, as discussed earlier in chapter 4, evades the overestimation of these tactical steps often taken as contingency measures to survive. De Certeau emphasizes that tactics are transitory in nature and occur within the system instead of taking it over completely. De Certeau’s discussion is a realistic appraisal of the appropriations or tactics which the urban dwellers embrace according to their needs. Many a times these tactics are adaptive in nature and work against him, strengthening the system. Informality, also called make do urbanism or occupancy urbanism, releases the state of its responsibilities to provide for the basic amenities to its citizens.

Ishvar and his nephew Om, keep moving from place to place in search of shelter after their huts are removed. From railway platforms to different pavements, they along with other homeless inhabitants of the city sleep and keep their belongings wherever they are allowed a space or a temporary roof, making it their home. Their precarity reaches its peak when they along with other beggars and pavement dwellers are poured into trucks, again to maintain the beauty of the city as a world class city.

After they are freed from the jail, they find refuge in a tiny corner of veranda of Dina's rented flat, who herself is being constantly threatened by the landlord for using the flat for business purposes. A large part of this novel deals with spatial struggles of Dina, the tailor and Maneck, as they squeeze through their everyday lives fretting over the only roof and shelter available to them at the time.

The tailors plan to visit their village in search of a girl for Om to get settled however, owing to some unfortunate twist of events Om becomes victim of forced sterilization. The operation goes wrong causing Om to lose not just his fertility but also his limbs. By the end of this novel, the tailors are seen as maimed beggars on the streets of the city. The novel and its characters are often lauded for depiction of resilience of the urban poor. However a closer look at novel reveals that instead of narrating a tale of progress and improvement, the story is a sequence of events following a downhill spiral in the lives of urban underclasses. It can be said that their maimed bodies, being different produce embodied differential space but these are spaces of continuous struggle and precarity.

While, Lefebvre in his work "Right to the City", argues that right to the city, which includes right to basic amenities as well as right to participation in the making of the city, is a radical cry and demand for a class-less and state-less society where all space is differential space, he is nonetheless, ambiguous in suggesting any roadmap to be followed in order to achieve this utopian ideal.

5:4 Unlearning the city and Spatial Appropriations by the Urban Poor in *A Fine Balance*

Earlier in this discussion we referred to Ghertner's analysis of how the 'discourse of nuisance' has predominated the judgements related to slum removal and the way this discourse has impacted the descriptions of slums and slum dwellers in the statements of those judgements. In the same way, the discourse of spatial planning is dominated by the capitalist abstract space. Swati Chattopadhyay realizing the importance of discourse, builds an argument for the development of new 'vocabulary of the city' to analyse the materiality of the city that would also capture the lived experience of its inhabitants, especially the urban subaltern. She propounds that in our approach towards research for urban planning, we need to place subaltern practices of transforming, appropriating and co-constructing infrastructure in cities, at the centre of understanding the urban, rather than the periphery. This book provides an in-depth study of street cricket, political wall

writing, and religious festivities as visual culture of the marginalized. Public spaces according to her are actively constructed and construed by its inhabitants (Chattopadhyaya 199). About city streets, she argues that for upper middle classes a street is primarily a passage but to the subaltern it is a place of habitation (203). However, governed by a dominant aesthetic and spatial paradigm, the modern city image depends upon the removal from public space ‘the sensorial excess of the underclasses’ (Chattopadhyaya 157) ensuring a visual homogeneity.

Though ‘A Fine Balance’, is seen by many as part of stereotypical depictions of Indian cities as ridden with slums, filth and poverty. Although this argument is also valid to some extent and holds weight, nevertheless, a close reading of this novel also reveals the kaleidoscopic landscape and life-worlds of urban subaltern activities transforming the materiality of spaces putting it to multiple uses deviant to their authorized functions, revealing the agential potential of the proletariat.

Asef Bayat uses the term ‘City inside-out’ for the neoliberal city, where a massive number of citizens become compelled by the poverty and dispossession to operate, subsist, socialize and simply live a life in public spaces. Here, the outdoor spaces (back alleys, public parks, squares and main streets) serve as indispensable assets in the economic livelihood and socio-cultural production of a vast segment of urban population and consequently, as fertile ground for the expression of street politics (27).

Mistry’s descriptions of the city are not descriptions of bricks and concretes, roads and buildings but spaces created by everyday activities and daily struggles of the urban poor which include labourers, low wage workers, hawkers, vendors, beggars, monkeymen, hair collectors etc. where the public space is actively constructed and construed by city inhabitants (Chattopadhyaya 199).

Describing the scene at the city railway platform, Mistry writes, “They spent two more hours on the platform, smoking, watching the early morning commuters who were mainly vendors waiting with baskets of pumpkin, onions, pomfret, salt, eggs, flowers balanced on their heads. An umbrella repairer was preparing for work, anatomizing broken umbrellas, salvaging the good ribs and handles. A contractor with his band of painters and masons, armed with ladders, pails, brushes, trowels, and hods, went by smelling like a freshly painted house” (Mistry 349). These are typical sights, sounds and smells of various public spaces of Indian cities. These spaces are conceived and physically built for specific purposes contrary to the use they are being put to as described in this passage. Through their bodily presence these people complicate the zoning and

spatial division imposed upon the urban space, by planners and city authorities thereby creating differential space (owhin n.p). Animated by everyday activities of urban subaltern, these spaces get transformed, infused with new meanings, making a new city every day.

Mistry describes platforms, railway lines, streets and pavements not as disembodied urban structures built for fixed purposes, but as they are used and inhabited by the urban underclasses, enlivened by their activities, howsoever apparently abhorrent they may seem. He delineates how the tailors, while they were sleeping at the station “.....visited the wasteland beyond the station to urinate and had another drink of water before untying the bedding. The frequency of trains dimmed as the night deepened. They lay down with their feet resting protectively on the trunk (347).

While the tailors were going through the worst time of their homeless plight in the city, Mistry sprinkles these moments with sights and tastes of famous Indian snacks ‘pao bhaji’. Mistry delineates how Ishvar “...bought a spicy mix of fried onions, potatoes, peas, chilli and coriander , stuffed into two small buns ‘pao-bhaji’ (Mistry 347). The novel is replete with such events and activities where the characters engage with materiality of the city spaces, mutually constituting each other in a spontaneous and diverse way. These activities or appropriations challenge the habit of disciplinary imagination in architecture and urban design that presumes permanence as necessary. Urban spaces, using Chattopadhaya’s vocabulary, can be fungible, ephemeral and contingent, when we look at them from an embodied. Physical spaces take complete meaning and real presence only when they are infused with human energy and human activity in it. A (social) space is a (social) product and every society produces its own space which individualises and distinguishes it from other spaces.

5:5 Conclusion

It can be concluded from the textual analysis of this novel that though spatial appropriations by the urban proletariat do assist them in surviving the odds, continue fighting for a living and exhibit agency in occupying spaces to meet their immediate and daily needs . However, he also delineates the hazards and threats which these spaces expose these inhabitants to, keeping their lives on the edge of extreme vulnerability. These spaces further marginalise them, as they do not comply with the aesthetic ideals of a world class city attractive for national and international investment, and are often demolished for such reasons. Law, like the neoliberal state also follows the logic of

capitalism and prioritises private ownership. Together, these forces debilitate the urban poor to such an extent that he often gets stuck in generational cycles of poverty. Lefebvre like Marx, offers the solution of an outright revolution, a classless and stateless society, a society of self-rule, where all spaces are differential spaces. However, he is ambiguous about how to achieve these ideals. He sees potential in differential spaces produced by the marginalised dwellers of the city, which is in itself debatable. These spaces, as they keep them surviving in one way or the other make them resilient to the deprivation they find themselves in. Then there are also questions about the pragmatic implications and implementations of such revolutions. In given circumstances a continuous struggle for a welfare society is the only silver lining.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6:1 Conclusion

The scholarly pursuit of relationship and representation of space in literature is not an entirely new approach towards literary analysis however the spatial turn in humanities has given rise to formal methods or approaches like spatial literary studies, geo criticism, literary geography, spatial poetics etc. to an interdisciplinary spatial study of literary productions. This thesis is an unassuming attempt to introduce Lefebvre's theory of spatial triad along with other significant spatial debates surrounding spatial justice and subaltern urbanism in literary analysis. From the literature review of slum literature, it can be implied that stories of peripheralized people wrestling for equitable rights to the space and services of the city, go well back to the inception of the industrialised city in the 19th century in the European continent. The stories of novels selected for the purpose of a 'spatially oriented criticism', are embedded in cities of global South, which share aspects quite analogous to the industrial cities of 19th century Europe. Yet, these cities share some attributes which are peculiar to them and invite separate academic attention and enquiry.

In the first chapter of his book *Production of Space* (1974), Lefebvre expresses his intention to develop a theory that would grasp the unity between three fields of space; physical (perceived space), mental (conceived space) and social (lived space). This is a trialectical concept of production of space, which responds to the post-structuralism tradition of western philosophy and the urban crisis of 1960s and 1970s in Paris. Keeping this unitary theory of spatial production, I have ventured to investigate the informal production of spaces and the political nature of this production in mega urban centres of global South.

The question no 1 of this thesis seeks to inquire the impact of spatial appropriations by the urban poor on the modern city discourse. An important part of Lefebvrian theorization of this constant conflict between conceived abstract space and lived differential space is the eradication of visual heterogeneous culture by the state mode of production of space. This conflict and contradiction is manifested in the politics of spatial planning, and discourse. In *A Fine Balance* the huts of slum dwellers are demolished in the name of beautification of the city, without providing them alternative spaces of residence. Swati Chattopadhyay critiques the short comings, such as lack of vocabulary to describe the city in modern urban theory. She examines the way subaltern

groups transform, appropriate and co-construct infrastructure in the cities, placing such practices at the centre of understanding the urban, rather than periphery (Lawhon n.p). I have attempted to link this theoretical intervention by Chattipadhyay, to the embodied representations of subaltern spaces in the selected text and the way these representations portray these practices as integral to the production of a distinct cultural landscape of South Asian cities. The street schools or women doing their household work in the streets, vendors and hawkers selling all kinds of items are examples of such embodied spaces from the selected texts, which constitute the typical and unique cultural configuration of a South Asian city.

The question number 2 of this thesis inquires that how the production of urban informal space can be explained through Lefebvre's Spatial Triad. It is argued that informal use of spaces by the urban poor is a result of 'conceived spaces' (representations of spaces), which are conceived under the logic of capitalism. Lefebvre uses the term "abstract space" for this commodified and homogenous neoliberal conceptualisation of space, a space oriented towards exchange value. As spatial triad is a trialectic, conceived space is not the only force involved in the production of space. The disenfranchised inhabitants of the city, through their spatial practice produce lived space, also called "differential space", a diverse, spontaneous and heterogeneous space which is oriented towards use value. In the case of urban subaltern these spaces are often labelled as slums, shanti towns, Favelas, pavement settlements etc. People building their shacks at a truck stop or living on pavements are a few instances of such spaces in the selected texts. This thesis has included many such references from the selected literary texts, theorists and related research articles/books to examine and analyse this process of production of space.

The question number 3 of this thesis seeks to investigate the spatial politics of dominance and appropriation and its implications as they operate in the selected texts. The trialectal production of space, as it involves power struggles between global economic system, state mechanisms and inhabitants of the city; it makes it essentially political in nature. Spatial production or control often involves an assertion of dominance and ideology, making it political. According to Lefebvre space is not a scientific object removed from ideology or politics; it has always been political and strategic. Space has been fashioned and moulded from historical and natural elements, but in a political way. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally populated with ideologies (Lefebvre1970). In *Karachi Vice* the demolition of village by a private housing society is

an effort to impose the ideology of commodification of space over the space, similarly the eradication of slums in *A Fine Balance* follows the similar ideology of using the city space to attract international tourism and business. In both cases the motive is to promote business instead of wellbeing of the inhabitants.

The thesis has also examined the political nature and potential of struggles of poor inhabitants in the appropriated spaces and getting basic amenities of life. Taking a balanced view of informal urbanism by the underprivileged class of society, this thesis while accepting ‘evolutionary progress’ of these practices in reclaiming the city also recognises the continuous struggle and a sense of precarity faced by these inhabitants. Lefebvre calls for a revolutionary takeover of the system by the people, both through peaceful non-movement appropriations and aggressive agitations. He envisions a stateless and classless society, where differential space predominate the idea of abstract space. While this idea is itself too romantic or radical to practice, even the way it be achieved, according to Lefebvre as through appropriations of spaces is debatable. In case of the selected texts it is observed that the condition of these people is extremely precarious to pose any threat to the forces of status quo. They spend their lives in fighting violence, poverty, demolitions and striving for the basic amenities of life.

This sheds a sceptical light on the potential for the amelioration of conditions of poor people. While the potential is not revolutionary at all, even its evolutionary prospects in the favour of the poor are varied, contingent and have many aspects. In some cases people achieve considerable success in reclaiming rights to spaces and to services and manage not just to survive but also thrive. In other cases, where state becomes the sole representative of neoliberal forces, the deprivation might continue for generations, perpetuating the generational cycle of poverty.

6:2 Recommendations

Spatial concepts by Lefebvre as well as other spatial theorists have an immense potential in the interdisciplinary approach towards literary analysis. Lefebvre’s diverse concepts can be found in his copious body of work on space, urbanity and their relation to state, economy, society, human body and mind. *Production of Space, The Urban Revolution, Critique of everyday life, Rythmanalysis and Right to the City* are some of his most eminent and important works in the field of urban academics and scholarship. These concepts can be of great significance in the enrichment and expansion of literary theory inclined towards spatiality in literary works.

Lefebvre's spatial triad and related concepts can provide interventionist lens to other novels having similar themes as the selected novels for this novel. Many novels set in slum areas of the global South can be read under these concepts in combination with other spatial or even lens related to other fields of study.

In addition to slum subaltern, Lefebvre's concepts of production of space and its political nature and potential for the disadvantaged, can be used to study and intervene in general subaltern and disability studies as represented in literary works. These concepts can provide theoretical underpinnings to the inquiries related to the questions of marginalised groups like women, queers or racial groups producing embodied differential spaces and using it to their advantage. Similarly novels describing transnational diaspora spaces i.e. Netherlands etc. or spaces of religious minorities can also be studied with Lefebvre's concepts as theoretical lens.

Lefebvre's concepts can also be instrumental in the study of mutually constitutive relationship that exists between body and space.

The relationship between gangs and space can be read in detail under the modern gang studies supplemented with spatial concept, in the novel *Karachi Vice* and other novels based on gang stories in a future research

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