

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Mala Srivastava

A small-town poet in the news, murdered by her
politician-lover in Patna

Patna

An old city on the banks of the Ganges described by one writer
as “the subcontinent’s heart of darkness”

Binod Singh

A journalist in Bombay who, like many others we know,
wants to write a real story

Bombay

The city now called Mumbai, home to the Hindi film industry
also known as Bollywood

Vikas Dhar

A popular Bollywood director who specializes in sleaze,
asks Binod to write about the death of Mala Srivastava

Baba

Binod’s high-minded father, a documentary film-maker in Patna

Ma

Binod’s mother, a school teacher

Rabinder Singh

Binod’s cousin, in Hajipur Jail, who aspires to
produce a Bollywood film

Delhi

A city where, Binod is informed, people use crude language
“because they have had the sword of history repeatedly
thrust up their backsides”

Iraq

A far-off place from where news of war arrives
rich with rumors

Bua

Rabinder's mother, Baba's sister, a prominent politician in Bihar

Bihar

Binod's benighted home state, in eastern India,
with Patna as its proud capital

Bettiah

A small town north of Patna, where Rabinder grew up,
a place famous for kidnappings and extortion

Neeraj Dubey

Rabinder's classmate from Bettiah, a Bollywood film-star

Arpana

Binod's former wife

Roma Banerjee

Rabinder's illicit lover in Patna, married to a bureaucrat

Benares

Ancient city, where on getting off the train with funeral ashes
Binod first sights the poster for a film *Korean Kama Sutra*

Neelu

Binod's sister

Shatrughan

Neelu's husband, once rode in a car with Steven Seagal

Lalji

Bua's husband, housed in a mental asylum in
Ranchi till his death

Manik

Lalji's nephew, part-entrepreneur, part-criminal, part-politician

Ratauli

Baba's village, near Motihari

Motihari

Another town in Bihar, Baba's birthplace, where Gandhi
started the anti-colonial freedom struggle

George Orwell

A British writer born in Motihari

Ulan Bator

An imaginary place conjured by a man on his marriage-bed