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ENGAGING HISTORY: POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION IN RECENT INDIAN ENGLISH NOVELS

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an investigation into the engagement with and representation of history in the works of a number of Indian English writers of the 1980 and 90s as well as a couple of very recent writers. It applies strands of colonial and postcolonial debates, ideas from postmodern literary theory and philosophy of history, and a sense of historical context to a few selected novels: Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie, The Shadow Lines by Amitav Ghosh, The Trotter-Nama by I. Allan Sealy, The Great Indian Novel by Shashi Tharoor, Such a Long Journey by Rohinton Mistry, Looking Through Glass by Mukul Kesavan, Rich Like Us by Nayantara Sahgal, Red Earth and Pouring Rain by Vikram Chandra, What the Body Remembers by Shauna Singh Baldwin, and The Point of Return by Siddhartha Deb. The study begins from the premise that these novels are characterized by an oppositional and contestatory attitude towards colonial as well as nationalist discourses. An attempt has, thus, been made to explore how, through a critical and revisionist engagement with colonial and nationalist historiography, these novels try to capture and invent a new reality of postcolonial Indian nation. Through new methodological and philosophical interventions into the notions of history and historical representations, they attempt to address the issue of socio-political marginality, and provide new insights for historiography.

The introductory chapter starts by offering a broad survey of the kind of historiographic representation that has been dominant in colonial and postcolonial India. The chapter attempts to situate the texts selected for the present study in historical context by exploring the genesis and development of historical consciousness in Indian novels from the time of its colonial advent to the modern times, and the changes in attitude and perspectives among the writers of fiction in English regarding fictional engagement of history, even as Indian historiography goes through paradigmatic shifts from a contestation of colonial historiography to nationalist self-assertion, and from being an essential part of nation-building to the 'prose of insurgencies' of the Subaltern School.The chapter also presents some terminological explanations, rational for the selection of the texts and brief chapter summaries.

Chapter One, "History and Narratives", presents a discussion on the philosophical and methodological issues related to history-fiction interface as evident in the novels.History-

fiction interface and narrativization of history intervene significantly in the discourse of history by foregrounding the question of the interrelationships between narrativity and historiography.It is argued that these novels, in their problematizing of the dominant notions of historiography and in their search for lost, suppressed, marginalized histories of India, serve, in more ways than one, as supplementary and corrective toimperial, colonial, neo-colonial, nationalist historiography. While Rushdie, Ghosh and Deb utilize the power of memory to create a radically individual narrative that is meant to supplant a dominant, hegemonic conception of history, their forms are different.Midnight's Childrenby Salman Rushdie, The Great Indian Novel by Shashi Tharoor, The Trotter-Nama by I. Allan Sealy and Looking Through Glass by Mukul Kesavan employ a post-modern fictive strategy and magic-realism. In Ghosh and Deb's narrativization of history also we find, as in Rushdie, an overwhelming profusion of events, memories and places. Mistry, Baldwin and Sahgal write more or less in the realist form and prove that realism can also be effectively used to re-write and subvert dominant historiography. In some cases, like Red Earth and Pouring Rain, The Great Indian Novel, by obliterating the line between myth and history, the novelist exposes the falsity of the conventional fact/fiction opposition and thus acquires the status of an *itihaskar*. Towards the later part of the chapter, I further discuss the issue of history-fiction interface by revealing the ways fictional history fills the silence in academic historiography surrounding unrepresented and unrepresentable traumatic history such as the Partition. Narrativizations of history in these novels not only problematize the traditional concept of fiction and history but also work out alternative strategies to narrativize the history of India.

Chapter Two, "History and Nation", argues that the picture of the nation that emergesthrough the revisionist narrativization of history, is not celebratory as in its moment of birth but subversive and elegiac, one that is different than what nationalist or colonialist wish or present it to be.The chapter is structured around three distinct thematic concerns common to these texts. First of all, it looks into the disenchantment and the sense of betrayal with the nation and nationalism in these texts, a disenchantment that was the result of socio-political and intellectual currents of the particular historical time in which they were written. Secondly, it is argued that the derivativeness of the concept of nationalism as well as the continuation ofthe legacy of colonialism by the postcolonial elite were the causes of consequent failure of the nation-state in delivering the promise of freedom and liberty.

Rushdie, Tharoor, Sahgal, and Mistry go on charting the failure of the nation and lament the rotting away of all the promises and expectations of a nascent republic betrayed by the ruling elites. Novels like The Shadow Lines by Amitav Ghosh, What the Body Remembers by Shauna Singh Baldwin, and The Point of Return by Siddhartha Deb reveal how the Partition, the very moment of the birth of the nation, destroyed one of the most revered foundations of the nation: that is, the idea of a stable community, the feeling of shared heritage and belonging. It is observed that these novels are not as overwhelmingly about nation-building or celebration like the earlier nationalist novels but about nation-mourning. Finally, I read these texts as counter-narratives to the national narratives in that, in place of a singular, unitary nation, they introduce the idea of a nation which is characterized by multiplicity and heterogeneity. By providing space of enunciation to the margins of the nation, these novels counter the ideas of authenticity, purity of national identity inherent in nationalist construction of India.

The picture of the nation, riddled with violence, cracks and fissures, is best represented in corporeal terms by the writers. The corporeal representation of history and nation is examined in Chapter Three, "History and Body". This chapter examines how Indian English novels represent history, mostly disruptive and traumatic history of the sub-continent is represented through the 'body'. First, the chapter explores body images in terms of Bakhtin's grotesque realism. If the alternative historiography of these texts point to the vibrant possibilities of histories against the fixed, monological, and totalizing History, opening up spaces for different discourses, this new structure and meaning of historiography goes hand in hand with grotesque realism.The excessive, carnivalesque bodies signify the teeming plurality and the fluidity of Indian identity which, like the bodies of Saleem, Justin and Mik Trotter in The Trotter-Nama, and Sanjay in Red Earth and Pouring Rain, remain uncontained and uncontainable in fixed form. Next to grotesque realism, I will explore politics of visibility, as well as the depiction of wounding, sickness, markings, scars, torture, and disabilities in the bodies to show how the violent effects of history are seen on the individual bodies. The broken, fissured, scarred bodies in these texts can be read as commentaries on the state (condition, health, corruption, cruelty, injustice) of the body politic. Bodies in these novels are inscribed with historical conflicts and paradoxes, and as such they are crucial for comprehending the visions of history that the writers attempt to represent.

Chapter Four, "History and Politics of Representation", examines the historical, linguistic, ideological and locational factors of the postcolonial condition, and their ramifications in the project of re/writing of or re/narrating history and the nation. A major part of the chapter deals with the politics of reception and consumption vis-à-vis the engagement of history in these texts. This chapter takes into account the role of the market and publishing industry, as well as the Western academy in the dissemination of these texts as the most authentic national documents of postcolonial India. It looks at the various possible and common criticisms directed against these writers in their attempts at engaging history: elitism, postcolonial exoticization, and falling prey to the 'packaging' game of globalized market force.It analyses the ways in which representation of history has been done and most importantly, *how* and *if* the writers have managed to avoid the many pitfalls that such narrative representations are often prone to.

The concluding chapter notes the crucial role and significance of history in postcolonial India, and argues that there is an ascendancy of historical debates in Indian public life, which is further given impetus by discourse of globalization and the rise of fundamentalism in Indian political life. It is observed that in fictional writings also the historical enterprise and engagement with history and nation remain insistent. The relevance of literary re-writing of history in providing much needed balance in understanding our times in wider perspective is underlined. My conclusion argues that the novels under the present study depict the continuing problems and maladies afflicting the democratic ethos in postcolonial India. The chapter concludes with some brief observations regarding the changing facets of fictional representation of history in a few very recent novels which are characterized by a more diffused kind of approach to history in comparison to the writers discussed in the present study.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled **"Engaging History: Politics of Representation in Recent Indian English Novels"** being submitted to the Department of English & Foreign Languages, Tezpur University, Tezpur, Assam in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of doctor of Philosophy, has previously not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or any other similar title or recognition.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **"Engaging History: Politics of Representation in Recent Indian English Novels"** submitted to the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tezpur University in partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is a record of research work carried out by **Mr. Arindam Sarma** under my supervision and guidance.

All help received by him from various sources have been duly acknowledged.

No part of this thesis has been submitted elsewhere for award of any other degree.

Dated: 12/4/12

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For my parents

Mamoni Sarma
and
Late Amoolya Kumar Sarma

Introduction

These which the inexperienced call true, *I maintain to be only* better, *and not truer than others.*

(Plato)

The trouble with Engenglish is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don't know what it means.

(Salman Rushdie)

In Vikram Chandra's novel Red Earth and Pouring Rain (1995), the Englishman Markline disparages the narrative tradition of India which according to him is unscientific, unruly and untrustworthy because it lacks Cartesian clarity and does not follow the sacred rules of Aristotle's Poetics of which Markline is a great admirer:

> I've read your great books, all the great wisdom of the East. And such a mass and morass of darkness, confusion, necromancy, stupidity, avarice, I've never seen. Plots meander, veering from grief to burlesque in a minute. Unrelated narratives entwine and break into each other. Whole huge battles, millions of men a side, stop short so that some dying patriarch can give a speech about duty, a speech that goes on for fifties of pages. Metaphors that call attention to themselves, strings of similes that go from line to line. Characters fall in love or murder, only to have their actions explained away as the results of past births. Characters die, only to be reborn again. Beginnings are not really beginnings, middles are unendurably long and convoluted, nothing ever ends. Tragedy is *impossible* here! [1][italics in the original]

Markline says that if India wants to amount to anything, there is much to be discarded and got rid of, and she must adopt "principles of science" and "natural logic". Despite such strictures and European prescriptions, the narrative, from the beginning to the end remains digressive, rambling, and non-linear. One of the narrators asserts the adequacy of Indian

narrative forms to the telling of history: "...but do not think that this story is untrue, because it is itihasa – thus it was..." (REPN27). The narrator is actually trying to enthrone narrative traditions established by oral epics, Puranas, and genealogical lists to the same status as European objective, scientific and linear narrative of development and historiographic traditions which the colonizers want to impose on the sub-continent.

Again, Rushdie's protagonist Saleem Sinai in Midnight's Children (1981) questions the validity and the very possibility of objective historiography and attempts to write the nation and its history in the guise of an extravagant Bildungsroman. Rushdie in the person of Saleem goes on exposing the textuality and constructedness of all historical discourses. At the same time he denounces all kinds of hegemonic histories—colonial, nationalist and neo-colonial national official histories, and in place of these Saleem tries to validate his own personal version of history, even though it is based on the shaky edifice of his unreliable memory:

> 'I told you the truth', I say yet again, 'Memory's truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies, also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events; and no sane human being ever trusts someone else's version more than his own.'[2]

I. Allan Sealy in The Trotter-Nama recycles the old Indian form 'nama', and through its inclusive narrative method Sealy hopes to recover the lost history of the Anglo-Indians, a people that has suffered erasure and dispossession in the hands of history. In the novel Sealy debunks the historian Montagu as "the Devil" and "a reprobate" and shows a strong suspicion of all objective and institutional history which has pushed this community off the official map.

> *The foul substance is called what?*
> *The foul substance is called History.*
> *And its opposite?*
> *Is the Chronicle.*[3] [italics author's]

What is common in all these writers is that all of them offer challenges to the Master Narratives or dominant discourse of history. In an attempt to repossess appropriated histories, these postcolonial writers have provided their own versions of historical events thereby resisting the histories written by those in power. These fictional versions of histories are usually highly personalized accounts of history which seek to contest the Grand Narratives of official History by foregrounding the micro-stories of history. Writings like these point to two important things: one, history is appropriated, hegemonised or misrepresented not only by colonial or neo-colonial discourses but also by dominant forces in postcolonial societies; two, postcolonial writers attempt fictional resistance to such dominant, elite and official historiography in a fiercely political and discursive move. Such resistance is not restricted to merely postcolonial writers but is a common trope in most postmodernist writing too. However, in the hands of the postcolonial writers postmodernist techniques of alternative narratives and the very narrativization of history assume a particular ideological value.

Postcolonial writers like Rushdie, Chandra, Sealy, Ghosh, Tharoor and Kesavan underline the fact that history is a discourse that is suspect and which needs to be interrogated, interpreted and problematized as any other discourse. Such writings can be read as subversive attempts from the margins to expose the ideological underpinnings inherent in the selection, codification and presentation of events as official, authoritative dominant history. The re-evaluation and re-deployment of past events transforms the supposedly immutable "objective truth" of history into mutable subjective narratives which helps to foreground other(ed) histories ignored by "objective" official histories.

This thesis is an investigation into the engagement with history in the works of a number of Indian English writers from the 1980s to a few recent ones. As the title suggests, this study focuses on representations of history in the works of some of the Indian English writers, beginning with Salman Rushdie up to the very recent writer Siddhartha Deb. It applies colonial and postcolonial theories, ideas from postmodern literary theory and philosophy of history, and a sense of historical context to selected novels by Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, I. Allan Sealy, Shashi Tharoor, Rohinton Mistry, Mukul Kesavan, Nayantara Sahagal, Vikram Chandra, Shauna Singh Baldwin, and Siddhartha Deb. The study begins from the

premise that these novels arecharacterized by an oppositional and contestatory attitude towards colonial, nationalist, and all other hegemonic power structures. It is argued that they adopt an insurrectionary, subversive attitude towards official, elite historiography and subscribe to post-modern problematizing of fiction and history. Most importantly this thesis investigates and examines the ways in which these novels have attempted to narrate India from traditions and frameworks of representation, both colonial and nationalist, and how they have contested "those ongoing abuses of power, both physical and discursive, which have characterized the creation of the nation of India in 1947, and subsequent attempts to regulate and curtail the proliferation of elements within it which deviate from official ethnic and social prescriptions".[4]

These writers, who are literally "midnight's children", challenge and question the established conventions of traditional historical writing. Through radical revision, reinterpretation and relocation of received historiography, they have sought to contest not just colonialism but goes beyond it to question and contest nationalist historiography and the very idea and validity of a unitary nation-state. From the beginning of the 1980s till approximately the mid-1990s, from Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children (1981) to Mukul Kesavan's Looking Through Glass (1995), there was an increased thematic interest in Indian English novels in the affairs of the public arena. This "turn to history"[5] is the most significant characteristic of Indian English fiction published in the 80s and the 90s. These novels have taken the public sphere of Indian society, national politics and general sweep of Indian history as subjects, with which the protagonists' individual lives are intertwined.

Retelling of the history of the nation has been done sometimes with fantastic elements or magic realism and sometimes in the realist form. These recent novels in English have often presented an allegorical representation of history. The narratives are characterized with playful irreverence and daring and dazzling stylistic and linguistic experimentations. Speaking of these commonalities among the novels of the 80s and the 90s, Rushdie's Midnight's Children proved to be not only the precursor but also the most potent catalyst for the revitalization of Indian English Writing itself. T. Vijay Kumar has said Rushdie's novel has changed the modes of writing the nation for ever:

> By handcuffing individual stories to histories of nations, by locating the narrative impulse in the intersection of the public and the private domains,

> Rushdie's 'Great Enabler' has not only reconfigured writing about politics, but indeed has made writing about politics imperative. As a result, most novels published after Midnight's Children, engage with politics/history...[6]

History and history-writing are of central concerns in postcolonial writing. It is an acknowledged fact that history has been written by "the winners", usually colonial and Europeanpeoples, to justify their own selfish, violent, greedy imperial missions. The ideological perspectiveof imperial powers, and after decolonization, that of neo-colonialpowers have always remained the guiding force behind much of historiography from 19th century onwards. As a result history, controlled and written from this ideological perspective of the colonizers, has remained partial and biased. Such histories present only a small part of an infinitely complex whole; and secondly that part itself has been narrowly interpreted or, more often than not, misinterpreted out of the writer's ignorance, arrogance, (racial, personal, political) position in the power-structure, and prejudices.

To a great extent, modern history has explicitly or implicitly reflected and expressed and consolidated the ideas and ideals of nineteenth and twentieth century imperialism. These include in particular the assumed superiority of western white culture and its civilizing mission, a belief in "progress" grounded in specific social, economic and technological theories, a commitment to the supposed religious truths of Christianity, and a more secular but no less certain faith in liberal capitalism. It was their confidence in the absolute validity of such ideas that served for many to justify imperialism and imperialistic behaviour, and history was generally written from this citadel of power and by these imperial players who had accordingly and, it was assumed, altruistically shouldered "the white man's burden".

This unshakeable conviction of imperialism dominated much of the British historical enterprise of the nineteenth century. In the context of India, European Imperialism went hand in hand with the historical enterprise. Historians and scholars of 19th century projected India in negative light which helped them in justifying the military comquest of India. Some of the leading historians and scholars of such histories were Edward Gibbon, John S. Mill, J. M. Trevelyan, Bishop Stubb, John Seely etc. Colonial historiographyIn this regard, Bill Ashcroft points out the similarities between Gibbon, Macaulay and Trevelyan, whose works show a "compelling magisterial quality, an expansiveness of vision which rests on the absolute

conviction that the order and progress of empire had a certain inherent validity and inevitability which could not be countermanded".[7] Macaulay's pronouncement in his 1835 Minute is a telling example of the "heroic view of history"[8] of the colonized when he stated that "whoever knows [the English language] has ready access to all the vast intellectual wealth, which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded in the course of ninety generations".[9] Bishop Stubb's lecture on the purpose and methods of historical study in Oxford on May 1877 also exemplifies colonial Europe's pride in the supposed superiority of Western civilization:

> I will say that the true field of Historic Study is the history of those nations and institutions in which the real growth of humanity is to be traced: in which we can follow the developments, retardations and perturbations, the ebb and flow of human progress, the education of the world.[10]

Hegel was one of the most vociferous spokesmen who upheld the civilizing and imperial missions of Europe. In Hegel's scheme of Universal History, he made it clear that "History" belonged to some people but not to others. For him, Indians (who, for Hegel, meant only the Hindus) were one of those people without history. He concluded that, for example, "the Hindu [...] lived as if in a dream in that he could not distinguish between himself and the objects of his knowledge".[11] According to Hegel the 'lack' of objectivity of Indians resulted in the denial of their subjectivity, because they were "unconscious of [their] own individuality".[12] Hegel implied that the lack of historical objectivity and historical consciousness placed the Indians in a lower position in relation to the Europeans. As such, Indians, like the indigenous Americans and Africans, remained "peoples without history," and Hegel prophesied that in the greater tale of the Spirit's evolution they would either disappear or assimilate themselves to the rising West.

Such dismissal of the Indians from the realm of history reminds one of Hegel's notorious statements that "Africa has remained—for all purpose of connection with the rest of the world—shut up; it is the Gold-land compressed within itself".[13] It must be disregarded because "Africa forms no historical part of the world".[14] Colonial Europe's obsession with objectivity led many thinkers, like Hegel, tohierarchise different "nations" and their "minds"

in relation to their apprehension of "history" and "objective reality". Imperial nations of Europe utilized these kinds of arguments to justify the political practices of domination. "The notion of history as progress rests upon a fundamental cultural distinction between the European and colonized populations. It is this distinction which justifies the civilizing mission..."[15] It is this distinction on the basis of which John Seely endorses British rule in India:

> Much may be plausibly alleged against the system under which we govern India. It may be doubted whether it is altogether suited to the people, whether it is not needlessly expensive, and so forth...But I think it would be an extreme view to deny that our Government is better than any other which has existed in India since the Mussulman conquest.[16]

Within such logic, the imperial nations are the most civilized nations and, therefore, they are the chief subjects of history. The representation of India by imperial historians reveals this kind of racial arrogance and dogmas. As elaborated by Bill Ashcroft, it explicitly demonstrates the "function of the discursive practice of history in the control of discourse. The control of discourse is the control of representation itself and the representation of the colonized subject underpins some quite explicit material effects in the colonized world".[17]

In the later half of the nineteenth century, practical necessities compelled European scholars to immerse themselves wholeheartedly into studying India and its past and into exploring Indian culture and history. During this time of colonial expansion, it was felt by the British administrators that it was necessary to gain knowledge about the conquered people, their history, habits and laws, in order to better govern the acquired territories. Indology and Orientalism emerged as scholarly fields and they expanded the study of Indian culture beyond mere administrative requirements. Orientalist scholars, mostly from Germany, France and Britain, with genuine interests in Indian culture and history were delving deep into classical Indian literatures, philosophy and religion. In 1784 the Asiatic Society of Bengal was founded to encourage these studies. The philologists' discovery of affinities between Sanskrit and certain European languages was most significant for the Orientalists and led to the studies on indo-European heritage and a search for European origins in India. Gyan Prakash notes how

> This search and discovery of European origins in the India of Sanskrit, the Brahmanas, and texts essentialized and distanced India in two ways. First, because it embodied Europe's childhood, India was temporally separated from Europe's present and made incapable of achieving "progress". As an eternal child detached altogether from time, India was construed as an external object available to Orientalist gaze. Second, composed of language and texts, India appeared to be unchanging and passive. [-] the India of the Orientalist's knowledge emerged as Europe's other, an essential and distanced entity knowable by the detached and distanced observer of the European Orientalist.[18]

The European Orientalists depicted India as a passive object—the ignorant "other" of the objective, superior, dynamic, progressive West. Orientalist historiographies, catering mainly to a European audience, tended to essentialize India as feminine, sentimental, mystical-spiritual, as opposed to the masculine-rational, pragmatic-materialistic West. Orientalist representation reified India and Indians, and created a binary opposition between the West and India. William Jones' Institutes of Hindu Law or the Ordinances of Menu (1794) is another early example of colonial scholarship which is marked by shades of Orientalism. There is also the case of Romantic Orientalism where some scholars portrayed India in overtly Romantic note. Germany had nothing to do with imperialism in India, yet Germany took the lead in Sanskrit studies in the nineteenth century. One of the first German Sanskritists was Friedrich von Schlegel, whose Uber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier (1808) is a glorification of the religion and philosophy of the "most cultivated and wisest people of antiquity." The work of Schlegel and other orientalists helped in the development of German Romanticism, of which Indophilia was a major strand.

The charge of the lack of historical sensibility among Indians was continued in the nineteenth century by such scholars as James Mill. An interest in history was, to Mill, the eminent mark of reason and culture, and the intellectual maturity of a civilization. In his voluminous History of British India, Mill wrote that the literature produced by Indians was devoid of any historical works. This lack of historical sensibility was pronounced to be the

reason that the Indians were not a rational people and still was in a "rude age".[19] Mill in his The History of British India (1817) propagated the notion that ancient Indian models of recording history did not constitute proper historiography; this idea was largely accepted by the educated middle class and this created a wide-spread sense of tabula rasa. It is against such pronouncements that novels like The Great Indian Novel and Red Earth and Pouring Rain, and The Trotter-Nama emphatically posit ideas of History as *itihasa* or History as *lila/maya* and History as chronicle/*nama*.

Later, Macaulay who was one of the numerous Englishmen who were under the pernicious influence of Mill's History, penned the infamous "Minute on Indian Education" in 1835 where he argued that educational funds would be put to better use in teaching "sound philosophy and true History". It was a tactical move by which the study of history was sought to be made an essential part of colonization. Henceforth, historical analysis became, in the words of Gauri Viswanathan, the principal method "of teaching colonial subjects to identify error in their own systems of thought and, simultaneously, confirm Western principles of law, order, justice, and truth".[20]

Along with this supposed lack of history and historical sensibility, came the charge that India was a static, unchanging nation, inhabiting a dream-like world, caught in the stupor of contemplation, averse to action, ready to be guided and taken to the future by the vigorous and energetic British civilization. "Absolute Being is presented here [in India] as in the ecstatic state of a dreaming condition"; and the inhabitants of India, added Hegel, could not wake up from the "magic somnambulic sleep" into which they had fallen".[21] Marx calls India an "unresisting and unchanging society," a country "Vegetating in the teeth of time". Nothing much ever happened here which could claim any attention to History.[22] Vinay Lal explains: "In this view, the lack of a historical sensibility was equated with the very lack of history: India was merely a template on which new histories could be written"[23] More than hundred years later an Indian writer Shashi Tharoor strikes at this very notion that India is a passive stage where imperialism and imperial history played out the colourful, enlightening drama of progress and civilizing mission. In Tharoor's novel The Great Indian Novel, the narrator Vyas says that "the recounting of history is only the order we artificially impose upon life to permit its lessons to be more clearly understood".[24]

Imperial historiansin the nineteenth century, many of whom were British officers and administrators, spoke increasingly about an India which lacked historical change, good government and demócratic political institutions. The idea of India came to be èssentialized as spiritual and religious and unchanging, and therefore, the imperial mission or British administration was projected as crucial for India's transformation from primitive chaos to modernity and the realm of history. Arguments like these were fuelled by the liberal ideas and policies in England during this time. The continuing influence of Orientalist representationswas also responsible for such historiographies.[25] D P Singhal writes elaborately on the nature of British writings on India which suffered from "prejudices based sometimes on personal bias but often on group consciousness".[26] These works credited the British with "bringing to the subcontinent political unity, modern educational institutions, modern industries, modern nationalism, a rule of law, and so forth".[27] These historians veered away from the old Orientalist's concerns, and used their historiographic tools for the specific purpose of political dominance and effective governance. Gyan Prakash writes, "[t]he old Orientalist, buried in texts and devoted to learning Sanskrit and Persian, was replaced by the official, the scholar, and the modernizer".[28] Imperialist historiography glorified colonial rule as they saw it as helping the Indians acquire historical consciousness and educating them in enlightened policies and self-governance.[29]

After decolonization it was clear that history of the colonized needed repair. Amilcar Cabral expressed it this way: "The national liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people; it is their return to history".[30] History, and its associated teleology, has been the means by which colonizing Europeans have naturalized their concepts of time and imposed their version of the story on the colonized. Political decolonization was accompanied with the search for fresh ways of self-representation and resistance to colonial discourses, including the discourse of history. This resistance and attempts at self-representation by postcolonial societies is seen in the kinds of histories that are written from the perspective of the once-colonized, replacing the other versions imposed by the colonials. In the case of India, this re-assessment of history began from the very moment that nationalist temper had started emerging. The growing current of nationalism and nationalist historiography in the late nineteenth century started countering this Orientalized version of India, and this had a bearing on the imaginative writings, mostly novels, of the time.

The new currents of historical ideas in literature through novels, dramas, poems and other forms made their advent felt in the last decades of the 19th century, an important phase for the making of Indian literature. But we can trace a substantial degree of ambivalence on the literary works of this period. In the words of Nila Shah:

> On the one hand, the British had to be fought for which retrieval of the old values and tradition was upheld; on the other side, the social reformers tried to banish a few retrogressive customs and practices.[31]

The seeds of novel writing in India lay in the prose narratives in regional literatures, which subsequently led to the growth of the novel. It must also be remembered that the rise of regional literature was the outcome of a conjunction of several factors. The growth of English education played a vital role in popularizing the new form of novel. There was increasing demands for novels among the educated reading public. The earliest novels were mostly imitations of the British novels, even of second-rate ones. Use of realism as a literary strategy and the urge of social reform are basic qualities of these early novels. Incorporations of historical elements in these novels coincided "with the interests of the novelists in their past which was occasioned by a cultural crisis, which Indians had to face in the middle of the nineteenth century".[32]

The growth of English education not only stimulated history writing but also changed the ways histories were written in India. Histories were no more based on mythic conceptions of life but as the movements of events and happenings in time. Writers of historical fiction attempted to incorporate historical accuracy in their works. From the early phase of the development of the novel in India the novelist's concern with history was more or less perceptible. Of the early writers who paved the way for novel-writing in India, the most significant were Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Pyare Chand Mitra, Lal Behari Day, Shoshee Chandar Dutt in Bengali, Devakinandan Khatri, Kishorilal Goswami, Gangaprasad Gupta in Hindi, Rajanikanta Bordoloi in Assamese, O. Chandu Menon, C. V. Raman Pillai in Malayalam, Abdul Halim Sharar in Urdu, Ramachandra Bhikaji Gunjikar, N. H. Kulkarnee and Hari Narayan Apte in Marathi, Govardhan Ram Tripathi in Gujarati, etc. Of course, the real trail blazers were the Bengalis who dominated the scene. The novels of Bankim Chandra

and Romeshchandra Dutt were of particular importance because of the historical engagement in fiction.

Bankim's involvement with history was praised by the historians themselves. His mastery of details and his eminent success in portraying the personality of an age elicited the praise of no less a historian than Jodunath Sarkar. Bankim Chandra rejected the notion of writing a "novel of English type". Though many of his novels could not traverse beyond the category of romance his endeavour is hailed by later critics as it laid the foundation stone of Indian novel. The tradition of novel-writing, especially novels of historical consciousness flourished rapidly, and these regional novels aligned themselves to the historical and nationalist currents of their times. The true spirit of the epoch found its articulation in various Indian languages through poets and writers like Vallathol, Kumaran Asan, Bhai Vir Singh, Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor, Rabindranath Tagore and Nazrul Islam. Their writings reflected both, the common urge for social reform and a protest against colonialism. The prevailing ideologies like Gandhism and Marxism also crept in the writings of that age.

The involvement with history, nation and politics is not a new phenomenon in Indian literature. Much before the emergence of nationalist Anglophone writers like Anand, Rao and Narayan, writers in regional languages propagated anti-colonial sentiments and dealt with the issues of colonialism, its effects on the social and cultural spheres, and the newly emerging nationalist sentiments. The works of writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Fakir Mohan Senapati and Rabindranath Tagore exemplify serious fictional engagement with history, colonial oppression, nationalism and resistance.

Fakir Mohan Senapati's Cha Mana Atha Gunthal (Oriya; Six Acres and a Half), first serialized in 1897 provided a critique of both indigenous structures of oppression and colonialism. In a highly charged atmosphere of nascent nationalism in colonial Bengal Bankim Chandra Chatterjee wrote Anandamath where he envisaged a utopian alternative vision of history and India through the influential image of the land as mother. It is a fictional history imagining a rebellion against tyrannical rule but at a careful historical and allegorical distance. The novel is a powerful delineation of militant self-assertion in the name of nation.

Bankim projects the Muslims as the real enemies of the land and in the novel the rebels fight in the name of a Hindu Mother-Nation to uproot Muslims completely. Anandamath's pronounced anti-Muslim bias made it a problematical text to use for secular

nationalists. I shall refer briefly to Bankim's ambivalent portrayal of the British in the novel. In contemporary Indian historiography, Bankim's ambivalent portrayal of the British in Anandamath is read as paradigmatic of the predicament of the Western-educated middle class who were keenly aware of their humiliating subaltern position as a result of colonial rule but who also depended on it for education and employment. Despite its apparently laudatory attitude towards the British at the end, the novel is somber about the economic implications of the British presence in India. Bankim was highly critical about the harsh revenue collection practices of the British and its disastrous effects on traditional rural economy and agriculture. Such critique of deleterious economic changes was a powerful element in the growth of Indian nationalism and in Indian nationalist historiographies.

Bankim was intensely dissatisfied with history as portrayed by British authors and denied it the status of true history; a true history should be a reminder of the people's glorious past deeds which would inspire the repetition of such heroic acts. Bankim, however, never

managed to write such a history despite various aborted attempts. Bankim became aware that an academic, rationalist history of Bengal would not provide him with what he wanted—a series of symbolic events of defiance, of great acts which this people could be exhorted to remember, and when the time came, to re-enact. So Bankim resorted to a half-imaginary history in his novels which would espouse this uplifting message. The most important icon in Bankim's writing which became the inspirational image in nationalist discourse is that of the Mother equated with the concept of the nation and land. In the writings of Nehru and Surendranath Bannerjea we find this discourse. Feminist historians like Jasodhara Bagchi and Indira Choudhury-Sengupta often concentrate on the disabling effects of the Bharat Mata image for Indian women. We see such contestations in later novels by Sahgal, Baldwin etc. Both the novels written in the 1980s and after and feminist historiographies demystify the image of Mother India. Recent Indian historiography examines the way the image of Mother India was constructed and used by nationalist and Hindu nationalist discourse, which disturbs the illusion that Mother India is a "natural" concept beyond questioning. Such contestation of nationalist trope is found in in Rushdie's The Moor's Last Sigh, which denaturalises the nationalist fervour surrounding the image of Bharat Mata by highlighting and magnifying its incestuous potential and stressing the dangers of blind passion which the image of Mother India is intended to arouse in (Hindu) nationalist

discourse. Emergency novels like Midnight's Children, Rich Like Us and A Fine Balance parodies and attacks a powerful female figure—Indira Gandhi who was projected by her supporters as the very embodiment of India ("India is Indira, Indira is India"). These novels show that roughly a century after Bankim's Anandamath, the image of Mother India has exhausted its nation-consolidating potential.

The nineteenth century was also marked by social and religious reform movements aimed at regenerating religion and community. Controversies and debates emerged around these to which, predictably, the "woman question" became central. It was literature in indigenous languages, novels in Marathi, Bengali, Malayalam, and Gujarati, rather than English that addressed issues of social reform. If life behind the zenana curtain or purdah was a favoured subject for early Anglophone writers, bringing upper-class women out of seclusion or "purdah" became a shared concern for Hindu and Muslim reformers towards the end of the nineteenth century. These were fraught processes, unleashing resistance from orthodox

quarters, but also anxieties among male reformers themselves about the consequences, particularly for gender and sexual politics, of educating women and bringing them out of the home into the world.

In Tagore's important novel, The Home and the World these anxieties merge with a critique of the libidinal charge of militant nationalism and its gendered iconography. Swadeshi, a movement in which Tagore himself was heavily involved at its height, was premised mainly on the economic boycott of foreign goods but drew increasingly on the rhetoric and iconography of a revivalist Hindu nationalism that sought to define the nation in religious terms. When communal (Hindu–Muslim) riots broke out following the attempts of middle-class activists to compel peasants and petty traders—many of whom were Muslim—to observe the boycott, Tagore became the movement's most trench ant critic, calling on it to introspect on its high-handedness and Hindu biases.

From 1915 to early 1916, Tagore serially published Ghare Bhaire which, in as much as it critically challenged the course of the first popular anti-colonial movement became his most controversial moment. In his controversial and critical engagement with nationalism that makes Home and the World a text of continuing relevance, Tagore was implicitly addressing not only texts such as Anandamath but also his own earlier incar nation as a militant Hindu nationalist poet and song-writer. On one hand, the novel probes the role of imagination in

shaping historical events, and acknowledges that it is a powerful force in bringing about the national idea into being. But at the same time he was deeply troubled by the fact the dangerous aspect of the shaping power of imagination because it works through a process of exclusion and marginalization in constructing the national identity

Along with the growth of novels in different regional languages, novels in English came to be written in large numbers. Bankim, in fact, wrote his first novel Rajmohan's Wife (1864) in English. Romesh Chander Dutt's English translation of his Bengali novel Slave Girl of Agra (1909) and Sir Jogendra Singh's Nur Jehan (1909) are historical romances, and both of them deal with the Mughal past. But it must be noted that the impulse for invoking the historical past for the purpose of arousing national consciousness came to the Indian English novel a little later than in the novels in regional languages. The real upsurge of politically conscious novels in English started to be written from the second and third decades of the twentieth century, a period when the growing tide of resistance against the British helped it to come into its own.

This was the time when the national movement was rising, and both fiction and history were moulded bythis spirit of nationalism. Nationalist historians like R. C. Majumdar, B. R. Nanda, H. C. Raychaudhuri, Amalesh Tripathi, Beni Prasad, Surendranath Banerjea and K. P. Jayaswal contested the colonial version of India as a divided entity and stressed that the idea of nationhood had existed for centuries. As Ramila Thapar points out, this historiography vigorously claimedthat everything good in India—spirituality, Aryan origins, political ideas, art—had completely indigenous origins, that "the Golden Age in India had existed prior to the coming of the British and that the ancient past of India was a particularly glorious period in her history," and their task was to write its history.[33] In this regard, nationalist historiography emerged as a post-Orientalist representation that questioned and contested the authority, biases and inadequacies of Orientalist and older Indological knowledge. This nationalist historiography represented India as an active subject possessing a unitary self, and capable of autonomy and sovereignty. Such passionate nationalist representation of India was essentially part of the nationalist struggle of freeing the Indian subjectivity from colonial control.[34] Nationalist historiography brought to the fore many issues of urgency and socio-cultural and politico-economic interest, and stirred debate about historical source and focus.

Nationalist historiography was the most powerful trajectory of anti-colonial national view, and it, through its narrativization of Indian nationalism, contributed to the process of nation-building. Along with historiography, Indian English fiction was also showing the same urgency and need to articulate a resistant perspective and an essentially Indian identity. The novel in English seemed to offer an arena in which the conventions of historiography—and perhaps also Europe's dominant status as the subject of all histories—could be questioned and challenged. The novel in English provides the space to the postcolonial writers to narrate the story from the previously suppressed or neglected perspective of the colonized, and to articulate and represent themselves to themselves and the world.

The nationalist spirit so powerfully evoked by the anti-imperial Independence movement became a driving force for Indian English writers who began writing in the early decades of the twentieth century. Meenakshi Mukherjee writes:

> The independence movement in India was not merely a political struggle but anall-pervasive emotional experience for all Indians in the nineteen-twenties and 'thirties. No Indian writer, writing in those decades or writing about them could avoid reflecting the upsurge in his work.[35]

In responding to the momentous changes and to the needs of the present, the novelists of this nationalist phase tried to make sense of what had happened in the past. Some like A. S. P. Ayyar in his novels Baladitya (1930) and Three Men of Destiny (1939) went into the remote past for awakening national consciousness among people. But many other writers persistently wrote about the immediate present and very often the present condition.

Among the writers immersed in the nationalist ideology who most persistently tried to put their writings as a part of the national imaginary and nation-building, the most renowned are Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan. While these three writers are, in the words of Meenakshi Mukherjee, "diametrically opposed" to each other in their level of ideological commitment and modes of representation, what makes it inevitable to categorize them as nationalist writers is the fact that all of them subscribe to the idea of a unitary, essentialized Indian nation, and fixed identity in their novels which run parallel to nationalist history. Judith

Plotz makes some incisive comments on the connection between the writings of nationalist writers such as Rao and Anand and imperial writing:

> ...the construction of India...both on the parts of imperial British elite and of pre and post-Independence elites has involved the search for unitary metaphors, single narrative...Twentieth century Indian history has also constructed a single vision of progress towards national self-consciousness and *integration*.[36]

It is in this regard that later postcolonial writers beginning with Rushdie are different to these writers (a point to which will be discussed shortly).

But nationalist historiography was not without its weaknesses and problems. It came to be questioned on the ground that despite its challenge to Orientalist mode of representation, it accepted many of the patterns set by the earlier historiographers. Nationalist historians accepted the periodization of Indian history into the Hindu, Muslim, and British periods, later addressed as the ancient, medieval, and modern eras. This entailed, in the words of Dipesh Chakrabarty, that these historians accepted the transition narrative that describes the transition from medieval to modern or feudal to capitalist, despotic to constitutional, and which is connected to "modern industry, technology, medicine, a quasi-bourgeois (though colonial) legal system supported by a state..." He goes on to assert that "To think this narrative was to think these institutions at the apex of which sat the modern state, and to think the modern or the nation state was to think a history whose theoretical subject was Europe".[37]

The nationalists argued that contrary to the Orientalist representation, the ancient history of India had followed a universal spirit leading to the nation-state, republicanism, and economic development. They asserted that, once free from the shackles of colonial rule and exploitation, a "backward country" like India is capable of modernizing itself. What these nationalist historians could not see was that by asserting the very notions of progress, Reason, and Modernity, they put their representation tied to the essence of Orientalist cannon. Partha Chatterjee argues that nationalist contestation of colonialism in the name of Reason itself was an affirmation of the cunning of Reason, and that the very idea of a 'backward' India capable of achieving modernity, reaffirmed the project of modernity, making India ideologically incapable of transcending the Orientalist problematic.[38]

One of the themes of nationalist histories was equating the nation with its women. The narrative of Hindu women's history, which paralleled that of the nation, attained the status of a historical commonplace through A. S. Altekar's The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, originally published in 1938. As with the nation's decline, the decline in the status of women is partly attributed to Muslim rule. The focus here, as in the nineteenth century, was clearly on the status of upper-caste Hindu women since they constituted the nation's womanhood in nationalist discourse.

While colonial discourse in the late nineteenth century denied the possibility that India was a nation, or could ever become one because it consisted of several communities incapable of being merged into a national whole, liberal Indian nationalists proclaimed that India was a nation in the making. This national becoming was presented as an evolutionary process under the auspices of the Indian National Congress (founded in 1885) and its middle-class leadership in A. C. Mazumdar's history of the Congress from 1915 (Mazumdar 1985: 1–3). The prominent nationalist Surendranath Banerjea (1848–1925) argued in his autobiography, with the significant title A Nation in the Making (1925), that this national development should ideally be achieved along constitutional lines in cooperation with the British.

A later generation of writers and intellectuals started questioning the emphasis of these histories on the heroic role of the Congress and its leaders and the erasure of the role of the masses in the Freedom movement. In their retrieval of the lost histories of the community and in their attention to the "small voice of history" (Ranajit Guha), the postcolonial writers can be said to be attempting a reparation of these silences and gaps of the Grand narratives of nationalist historiographies. The most prominent text is Nehru's The Discovery of India which propounded one of the most important and influential conceptions of the Indian nation—"Unity in Diversity." It is a passionate celebration of the syncretic culture of India. The Discovery of India is perhaps the clearest explication available of the historical, political, and ethical basis for constructing independent India as an inclusive liberal democracy. It is both descriptive and prescriptive, and offers a remarkably comprehensive and useful insight into the ideological underpinnings of the first twenty years of Indian self-government. Nehru's ideas have been subject to much criticism by Indian intellectuals since the 1970s, who point to the current political situation as proof of Nehru's essential failure. Aijaz Ahmad, for instance, links Nehru with the "stagnation" of the post-colonial state. Bhagwan D. Dua

similarly sees the corruption of the Congress party as beginning with Nehru ("Nehru's Federalism").[39] Nevertheless, his legacy continues to have a profound impact both on critics, such as Sunil Khilnani, who advocate returning to a Nehruvian model of nationhood, and writers, for whom Nehru's texts are the source of a simultaneously powerful and problematic vocabulary for coming to terms with the modern Indian state. The debt that Seth, Rushdie, Sahgal, Kesavan, Roy and others owe Nehru in their engagements with the nation as a multicultural construct in their work, and the challenges to Nehru their ideas pose have been discussed by many critics such as Anna Guttman, Neelam Srivastava among others. For example, Anna Guttman, in her discussion of Seth's novel A Suitable Boy points out: "In privileging the ghazal, rather than the epics (favored by Nehru), as foundational Indian texts, Seth suggests an alternative and more inclusive reading of India's cultural history, one that better reflects the subcontinent's history of shared culture".[40]

Nehru's influence permeates Midnight's Children, and many of the novel's most discussed features are in some way evocative of that paternity. For instance, Rushdie's construction of the Indian nation as embodied in a single individual—Saleem Sinai—clearly has its antecedent in Nehru's work, in particular his representations of himself in The Discovery of India. Though literary analogies between the body politic and the corporeal individual have a long and well-developed tradition, Rushdie's main character, Saleem, whose face is so famously imagined as a map of India, bears a definite Nehruvian stamp. If Nehru's attempts to represent and/or "perform" the nation were entirely earnest, however, if occasionally uneasy and tentative, Rushdie's handling of that trope is strictly parodic. Saleem Sinai's complex heritage reveals the absurdity of trying to embody any nation, especially one as diverse as India, in a single individual. The biological son of a lower-class Hindu woman and her elite English lover, he is swapped with another child at birth and raised as the son of a Muslim family by a Catholic nurse. As such Saleem internalizes three of the subcontinent's chief cultural influences. The novel celebrates the creative tensions between personal and national identities. In this, it evokes Nehru's interweaving of personal and national histories in both An Autobiography and The Discovery of India. Similarly, Rushdie's depiction of India as a hybrid space closely echoes Nehru's construction of India as unified in diversity. But while Nehru strove for an impossible degree of accuracy and completeness in his account, even as he acknowledged the difficulties and inevitable limitations of that endeavor,

Rushdie's narrator, Saleem, revels in, and flaunts, his errors and draws attention to his omissions. Saleem's application of the notion of halal to the narration of history signals an explicit, self-conscious awareness of the exclusions that are an inescapable part of its writing (MC 59).

But the most serious problem of the nationalist historiography, and one that has proved to be disastrous for even contemporary Indian body politic is its emphasis on the unitary and singular historical nation because this notion has time and again displayed the great risk of defining the nation as an ancient Hindu one and excluding other communities, such as Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees, Anglo-Indians, Christians etc. Hindu nationalist interpretations did not go unquestioned, but many of the themes employed by the late twentieth century Hindu extremist politics were incorporated in the historical imaginings of the nation, and they became pronounced in the communal atmosphere in the late 1930s and the 1940s. With the rise of Hindu nationalism since the 1980s, history has been rewritten from this politically and religiously motivated point of view. According to Romila Thapar, "[t]his rewriting is tied to two fundamental ideas: the one privileging the origins and identity of the majority community; the second proving that religious minorities are foreign and therefore cannot be the inheritors of the land".[41] In the twentieth and the twenty-first century, Indian historiography has remained as politically contested a ground as ever.

The disenchantment of the Subaltern Studies with official (Congress) nationalism or nationalistic claims as embodied in the postcolonial nation-state, and its contestation of European or Orientalist metanarratives, have their parallels in the novels of the 80s and the 90s. As discussed in the next chapter, the emergence of Rushdie and other novelists of the 80s and the 90s coincided with the time of disenchantment with official (Congress) nationalism or nationalistic claims as embodied in the postcolonial nation-state. Jon Mee elaborates:

> Various economic and social pressures have led to the end of the so-called Nehruvite consensus in India. The idea of unity within—so central to the years of nationalist struggle and the building of the new nation state—has been displaced by an urgent need toquestion the nature of that unity. The issue of imagining the nation, the issue of the fate of the children of the midnight hour of independence, has become a pressing one throughout India. It is an issue

> which has been debated in all languages. The better novels in English of the past twenty years participate in this larger debate.[42]

Because of their serious and consistent and multifarious engagement with historical materials, these novels are, in more ways than one, regarded as supplementary and corrective to, and in contestation with imperial, colonial, neo-colonial, nationalist historiography.

This seems to be the right place to return to the question of difference between the earlier nationalist writers such as Rao, Anand, and Narayan and the post-nationalist writers such as Rushdie, Ghosh, Sealy, Mistry, Chandra, Kesavan and others. Jon Mee situates these differences in relation to Rushdie's metaphor "chutnification of history" (MC458):

> ...chutnification contains within it the idea of a variety of ingredients, which combine to make a history which cannot be captured by any one representative part of the recipe. Rao's novel was able to make use of a single village as a metonym for the nation. The Indian village was often the idealized antithesis of western industrialism in the literature of the national movement. Recent fiction has, in many ways, been more concerned with the modern Indian metropolis.[43]

This change of focus is crucial in understanding the changed attitude and state of the nation in Rushdie-inspired, post-nationalist Indian English fiction. These new novels, unlike those by Rao, Anand and Narayan, have displaced the village as a metonym for a unified nation and placed the city in the centre to capture the diversified, fragmentary quality of the nation marked by strife, self-contradiction and crisis. In place a singular, unitary nation and its mythic, constructed nature, these writers have introduced the idea of a nation which is characterized by multiplicity and heterogeneity. Mee elaborates: "The city offers itself as a trope for multiplicity, that is, as a place which, almost by definition, is not reducible to a singular identity". He points out Rushdie's Bombay as a place wherein "the fractured nation becomes defined by heterogeneity, a place where India's different cultures meet and India meets the world".[44]

These novels with their close attentiveness to the idea of multiplicity displace the idea of a homogeneous nation. Diverse communities and people who usually remain on the margin

of the nation clamour for space in these novels. Thus these novels are keen explorations of the question of socio-political marginality and the tensions and rifts which haunt themarginsoftheaspiringdemocraticnation—thedisenfranchised, the minorities, the unvoiced. Rushdie, Ghosh, Mistry, Baldwin, Kesavan, Deb and many other writers of the last two decades have closely charted the increasing, insistent inroads made by the so-far marginalized, under-represented people, who problematize the national imaginary.

This return of the "other" and the desire to return to Indian history challenges the nation-state's claims to inclusivity and full representation. Such a move reflects a more generally critical attitude to the form of the nation-state which has emerged since Independence in 1947. This critical attitude to the form of the nation-state is definitely a response to the suppression of differences in the name of unity. As Dipesh Chakrabarty insists, this is itself an outcome of decolonization and democratization, as groups that have been excluded or marginalized in mainstream histories have sought to contest and rewrite history.[45] What Nila Shah describes as "a proliferation of 'alternative histories of the excluded' produces a pluralist anarchy on the one hand and recreates the nation it belongs to on the other".[46] This desire to write alternative histories, and their attempt to give voice to the margins of the nation allow Rushdie, Sealy, Ghosh, Tharoor, Mistry, Chandra, and others room for an allegory of national history which is not forced to fit an essential Indian identity. Writing of the shortcomings of the predominant modes of Indian historiography, Partha Chatterjee laments, "Until such time that we accept that it is the very singularity of the idea of a national history of India which divides Indians from one another, we will not create the conditions for writing....alternative histories".[47] But as Peter Morey points out a consideration of Indian fiction in English exposes the unduly pessimistic nature of such strictures.[48]

The main thrust of the study is to explore the variety of historical engagements, and the ways in which novelists use history with consequences for politics of re-writing of history and re-imagining of the nation. The novels chosen for discussion are Salman Rushdie's Midnights' Children (1981), Nayantara Sahgal's Rich Like Us (1985), I. Allan Sealy's The Trotter-Nama (1988), Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines (1988), Shashi Tharoor's The Great Indian Novel (1989), Rohinton Mistry's Such A Long Journey (1991), Mukul Kesavan's Looking Through Glass (1995), Vikram Chandra's Red Earth and Pouring Rain (1995), Shauna Singh Baldwin's What the Body Remembers (2001), and Siddhartha Deb's A Point of

Return (2002). The choice of these novels was partly determined by their being texts that engage with pressing issues of public debates in India.

As evident, most of the novels selected are published in the 1980s and 1990s. These novels are products of a crucial period in the history of Indian polity, that of the breakdown of the Nehruvian secular consensus and the crisis of the very edifice of the postcolonial nation-state. This breakdown and crisis of democratic ideals began with the National Emergency (1975–7) and was further threatened by the rise to prominence of an alternative national ideology, Hindutva, based on the supremacy of Hindu religion and culture. This was also the period when received historiography in India came under tremendous attack from the Subaltern School. Not just the lopsided, Orientalist, and imperial versions of history, but nationalist historiography of pre- and- post-Independent period came to be vigorously questioned. Indian nationalist historiography sought to depict a master-saga of the nation in a coherent narrative. The essence of this nationalist narrative is its elaborate and heroic representation of the nation highlighting glorious ancient past and the heroic independence movement of Gandhi and Nehru.Even in the mid-1970s Hindu nationalists were propagating a kind of simplistic but dangerous historiography which represents the Indian nation as a Hindu nation and which dwells on a glorious Hindu past and emphasises the role of Muslims as bloodthirsty invaders and fanatical temple-breakers.[49]

It was in this ideologically charged and politically volatile period that the Subaltern School, feminist scholars, and Left revisionist historians were giving out a rallying cry to "democratize [...] the production of historical knowledge [and] to work towards a new kind of historical culture".[50] The present study seeks to investigate how writers of literary fiction who emerged during this period respond to these developments in Indian historiography in their novels, and how their image of India compares to these conflicting visions of the nation as portrayed by the British as well as by the nationalists.

The range and variety of the Indian English novel's engagement with history and "India" as imaginative concern is seen in these novels. Almost all of them are the ones who have keenly participated in the project of disrupting the edifice of received historiography, both colonial and nationalist, and have attempted to offer a revisionist historiography through their literary works.

Though this study seeks to focus on issues of history, historical representation and national identity, it does not contend either that the texts chosen here are representative of Indian literature generally or that they are *only* nationalallegories. Such a claim could hardly do justice to the richness and complexityof the writings of any of the authors under consideration. Many in India would argue (especially in the light of Rushdie's infamous indictment of regional literatures in his introduction to the Vintage Book of Indian Writing 1947-1997) that the true strengths of Indian literature lie in workbeing done in the different regional languages of the country, and that the high profile of writers in English is partly due to such factors as their easier accessibility, or even to alleged pandering to the expectations of Western readers (an issue which is discussed elaborately in Chapter 4). Many writers of vernacular languages have represented histories, among other things, in their novels, some of which would be found superior in many ways to their English counterparts, and much more fascinating because of their attention on local histories, complexities and dilemmas of modernity, urbanization, issues of caste and class, and questions of postcolonial belonging, citizenship and democracy. Writers like Shrikant Verma, Kamleshwar, Krishna BaldevVaid, Mohan Rakesh, Nirmal Verma, Mrinal Pandey, Shrilal Shukla (Hindi), Gopinath Mohanty, U. R. Anantha Murthy, Binapani Mohanty, Surendra Mohanty, Satakadi Hota(Oriya), Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay, Mahasweta Devi, Samaresh Basu, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Shishendu Mukhopadhyay (Bengali), Ismat Chugtai, Sadaat Hassan Manto, Krishan Chander (Urdu), T. S. Pillai, Shivaram Karanth, O. V. Vijayan (Malayalam), Kalki, Na. Parathasarathy, Su. Samuddiram, (Tamil), Tejashwi (Kannada), R. R. Borade, Jayawant Dalvi (Marathi), Lakshinandan Bora, Hitesh Das, Mamoni Roisom Goswami, Rongbog Terang, Rita Choudhury, Dhribajyoti Bora (Assamese), E. Sonamani (Manipuri) are among the numerous writers writing in veranacular languages whose works depict Indian history and nation in multifarious light.

Arguably, nowriter can ever be truly representative, and the ten writers chosen here are certainly no exception. The choice of Salman Rushdie's novel Midnight's Children was inevitable because it was this novel that injected a new dimension into Indian English novelists' encounter with history. Written in the historiographic metafictional mode, Midnight's Children problematizes historical discourse by writing a highly personalized version of Indian history and nationhood. The objectivity of mimetic historical writing is put

into question by Saleem, the narrator, who utilizes his unreliable memory to write the history of the nation. Rushdie's novel displays the new developments in the culture of postmodernism, especially the issues related to the interface of history and fiction. In Tharoor's The Great Indian Novel, key political events of Indian history are explicitly allegorized as episodes of the Sanskrit epic, the Mahabharata. The Great Indian Novel, like the other novels, is characterized by the presence of a clearly interventionist narrator, who makes sense of Indian history and its characters for us, though there is a distinctively postmodern arbitrariness in his ordering of narrative meaning.

Historical objectivity is also profoundly questioned by the nameless narrator of The Shadow Lines, who attempts the impossible task of putting into words what these narratives elide. In part this omission is because these events are impossible to interpret: "for to look for words of any other kind would be to give them meaning, and that it is a risk we cannot take any more than we can afford to listen to madness".[51] The novel is structured around the narrator's attempt to reconstruct a family tragedy, namely the mystery surrounding the death of his cousin; his methods of "investigation" are effected through memory, family stories and a constant confrontation with historical or "official" narratives. While discussing the historiographic intervention in these texts, the role of memory in revealing the textuality and narrativity of history is discussed at some length in the first chapter.Given the distortion of events in Pakistani and Indian official narratives, such fictional interventions and subversion through history-fiction interface, as seen in novels like Midnight's Children, The Shadow Lines and Such a Long Journey, are radical political moves.

Such a Long Journey is about fraught family ties and male friendships, as the promises of independence begin to show clear signs of corrosion under IndiraGandhi's authoritarian rule. The novel offers an unflinching scrutiny of the rot that has set in to the state and extended into civil society. Published in 1990, six years after the assassination of Indira Gandhi, Rohinton Mistry's Such a Long Journey, like Rushdie's Midnight's Children, is also a novel of the Emergency as theculmination of an ongoing erosion of the democratic ethos and secular political landscape. Nayantara Sahgal's novel Rich Like Us also depicts this grim period of Indian history, a time when the "world's largest democracy was looking like nothing so much as one of the two bit dictatorships we had loftily looked down upon".[52]

Partly magical-realist, partly realist, Mukul Kesavan's counterfactual narrative of a significant period of Indian history in Looking Through Glass, including that of Partition, explores the myriad historical possibilities that were eliminated as certain factions and trajectories won out over others in the years leading upto Independence and Partition.

The novels have been selected also for the reason that each one of them, in one way or the other, deals with the complex issues regarding the state of the postcolonial nation and the issues related to the re-presentation and re-imagining the nation in critical perspectives. This thesis does not accede to Jameson's contested claims about national allegory and third-world literature. The nation is not the only appropriate subject for any given literature, but is surely an important one in the current context of uncertainty about the nature of democracy and the role of the state in the face of competing values and cultural claims. The novels produced by Indian writers in the 1980s and 1990s share a strikingly common aspiration to represent a pan-Indian reality, a rethinking of the nationalist representations of the past and of historical writing, while drawing on a range of different narrative traditions eclectically incorporated within the broad framework of the novel in English. The novels display keen and complex engagement with history and the novels each revisit, in their own way, the historical novel. "They all present an allegoresis of the Indian nation by recuperating different versions of the national past: in the sense that they present different configurations, or emplotments, of specific historical events in India's colonial and postcolonial history".[53]

This project of critical questioning of the nation which disrupts the hegemonic, official nationalist agenda has been the result of various factors in Indian socio-political life. Various major political upheavals have affected India in the last thirty years. The suspension of democracy during the Emergency, the rise of the Hindu Right, and economic deregulation have all had a profound impact on the intellectual and political landscape and necessitate a reconsideration of older nationalist paradigms. This work emphasizes the ways in which narratives of the nation are necessarily challenged to imagine the nation as diverse, either by seeking out new languages of imagined tolerance and accommodation or by probing the fate of those subjects who are not the nation's normative citizens—women, subalterns, and non-Hindus, among others. I. Allan Sealy's The Trotter-Nama, Mistry's Such a Long Journey, Deb's The Point of Return, as well as Kesavan's Looking through Glass depict the question of

minority citizens and exposethe sinister logic of the state by which some people always remain unmapped into the official system.

'Very recent novels like What the Body Remembers by Shauna Singh Baldwin and Point of Return by Siddhartha Deb have been selected because they testify to the arguments made in the thesis that many of the dark events of history continue to traumatize life of the nation till today. The partition of 1947 is a case in point. These novels depict how the very idea of a secular, unitary, stable nation got disrupted at the very moment of its bloody birth, and how it remains a wound that refuses to be healed. Throughout the thesis the case of the partition has been given elaborate exposition and it has been supplemented with other partition texts like Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan and Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy Man. Regarding the literary representation of the Partition of the subcontinent, it must be noted that many great novels and short stories have been written in the regional languages which could not be included in the present study. Some of the most important works in Indian languages are Sadaat Hassan Manto's short stories in Urdu, Bhishm Sahani's Tamas (Hindi), Qurratulain Hyder's Sita Haran (Urdu, 1960), Krishna Sobti'sZindaginama (Hindi, 1979), and Jyotirmoyi Devi's Epar Ganga Opar Ganga (Bengali). Apart from literary treatment, the Partition has been the subject of a large number of films (M. S. Sathyu's "Garam Hawa" and Shyam Benegal's "Mammo", Pankaj Butalia's "Karavan") and television serials such as "Buniyad" and "Hum Log".

History is a form of representation and the way it is depicted, by whom and for who are questions that gain urgency in the real world.Since the thesis engages with the issue of "representation", it is necessary to briefly outline the various connotations of the term. The term "representation" has come to be appropriated by diverse areas such as literature and the arts, media and popular culture, pure and applied sciences, social and behavioural sciences, and so on. Most usages of the word "representation" cover its general lexical meaning, "to represent". The term "representation" which brings forth histories of all kinds can primarily be defined as "presence" or "appearance". Representations can be clear images, material reproductions, performances and simulations. Representation can also be defined as the act of placing or stating facts in order to influence or affect the action of others.

The word also has political connotations. Politicians are thought to "represent" a constituency, which implies that they have the right to stand in the place of another. The

question of "representation" is of special import in the arena of postcolonial studies. This expression has gained currency in postcolonial discourse essentially because it is related to problems that concern the following: (i) individual identity, (ii) power and language, (iii) hegemony and resistance, (iv) nationalism and hybridism, and (v) ethnicity and indigeneity. One of the most crucial sides to this complex debate is regarding the ideological, linguistic, historical and ethical issues surrounding the representation of the "subaltern".

Edward Said, in his analysis of textual representations of the Orient in Orientalism, emphasizes the fact that representations can never be exactly realistic: In any instance of at least written language, there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a *re-presence*, or a representation. Representations then can never really be "natural" depictions of the orient. Instead, they are constructed images that need to be interrogated for their ideological content.[54]

In a similar way, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak makes a distinction between *Vertretung* and *Darstellung*. The former she defines as "stepping in someone's place...to tread in someone's shoes". Representation in this sense is "a political representation," or speaking for the needs and desires of somebody or something. *Darstellung* is representation as re-presentation, "placing there". Representing is thus "proxy and portrait," according to Spivak.[55] The complicity between "speaking for" and "portraying" must be kept in mind. In The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues, Spivak addresses the problem of 'speaking in the name of':

> It is not a solution, the idea of the disenfranchised speaking for themselves, or the radical critics speaking for them; this question of representation, self-representation, representing others, is a problem.[56]

Spivak recommends "persistent critique" to guard against constructing the Other simply as an object of knowledge, leaving out the real Others because of the ones who are getting access into public places due to these waves of benevolence and so on.[57] If there is always an element of interpretation involved in representation, we must then note who may be doing the interpreting. Ella Shohat claims that we should constantly question representations, and that this questioning is particularly important when the representation of the subaltern is

involved. The representations of marginalized groups are few and often flawed as they do not hold the "power over representation", and whatever representations are there, these are "necessarily within the hermeneutics of domination, overcharged with allegorical significance".[58] The mass media tends to take the few available representations of the subaltern as allegorical or representative of all minorities in general. This collapsing of the image of the subaltern reflects not only ignorance but a lack of respect for the diversity within marginalized communities. In the context of literary representations of the marginalized people, such easy allegorizing and simplified images need to be examined with care.

Shohat also suggests points out how representations have vast implications for people in real context:

> The denial of aesthetic representation to the subaltern has historically formed a corollary to the literal denial of economic, legal, and political representation. The struggle to 'speak for oneself' cannot be separated from a history of being spoken for, from the struggle to speak and be heard.[59]

Although many see representations as harmless "likenesses", they do have a real effect on the world. They are meant to relay a message and more often than not it influences opinion and leads to action. We must ask what ideological work these representations accomplish.

Finally, if we again turn to Spivak and her question, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" we find that in this seminal essay, Spivak emphasizes the fact that representation is a sort of speech act, with a speaker and a listener. Often, the subaltern makes an attempt at self-representation, perhaps a representation that falls outside "the lines laid down by the official institutional structures of representation".[60] Yet, this act of representation is not heard. It is not recognized by the listener, perhaps because it does not fit in with what is expected of the representation. Therefore, representation by subaltern individuals seems nearly impossible.

Despite the fact that Spivak's formulation is quite accurate, there must still be an effort to try and challenge *status quo* representation and the ideological work it does. The work of various "Third world" and minority writers, artists, and filmmakers attest to the possibilities of counter-hegemonic, anti-colonial subversion. The writers under the present study and their works are also engaged in the act of representation of history and through it, the nation and its

people. Therefore, the fraught question of representation and the ideological complexities surrounding the act of representation become pertinent to them, too.

The first chapter explores the philosophical issues related to history-fiction interface as evident in the novels and the narrativization of history which becomes a powerful means of subverting dominant western and nationalist paradigms of historiography. In narrating the impossibility of a unitary, homogeneous nation, these writers have followed a radical set of philosophy regarding history and historiography. If the idea of a unitary nation is a myth and an imaginary construct, then history itself is necessarily a species of story-telling which is in a transformative relation to the story it tells. The fragmentariness of the nation-state can only be narrated through a historiography that itself subscribes to the necessity of a fragmentary practice. The earlier generation of writers like Anand and Rao worked within the framework of history as a collective memory. History, for them, was something which contains the past and which can be unearthed simply by telling it. Entangled as it was with the ideology of the nation-state, history, in the hands of the nationalist writers, was no more than a celebratory account of the march of certain victorious concepts and powers like the nation-state, bureaucratic rationalism, capitalism, science and progress. History was necessarily associated "with the grand narratives of 'right,' 'citizenship,' the nation state, [and] 'public' and 'private' spheres".[61] Even in their opposition to imperialism and colonialism, the older generation of writers sought to write a historiography which could claim to be complete in its representation of the past and in giving voice to the newly formed nation.

The idea of objectivity and scientific principles and absolute truth in history is now revealed to be something of an imposition of the Western world-view, and that it is one which has informed nationalist and colonial histories alike. History and its associated teleologies have been the means through which European colonialism sought to write their versions of supposedly authoritative accounts of the non-European world in a bid to legitimize its expansionist, exploitative mission. History has been generally figured as true, immutable, and objective as opposed to fiction which is defined as untrue and subjective.

Midnight's Children, published in 1980, became the pathbreaker in this regard. The novel inaugurated a post-foundationalist approach in its "initiation of history" that projected a significant and far-reaching influence on the writers of Rushdie's generation.[62] Midnight's Children, with its emphasis on the multiplicity of Indian identity, and its playful yet powerful

collapsing of the relationship between Self and Nation proved to be very liberating for many Indian English writers who started writing in the eighties. It was Midnight's Childrenthat showed how through such new "conceptual conjuring(s)"[63] of historiography, self and nation, as well as daring postmodernist experimentations, the constraints of writing a new historiography or historiographic fiction can be overcome. Following in the footsteps of Rushdie's Midnight's Children, novels like I. Allan Sealy's The Trotter-Nama, Shashi Tharoor's The Great Indian Novel, Mukul Kesavan's Looking Through Glass and Vikram Chandra's Red Earth and Pouring Rain, while dealing with Indian history, problematize the matter of India and challenge and question established conventions of traditional history writing by using the mode of what Linda Hutcheon calls "historiographic metafiction", that is "novels that are intensely self reflexive but also both re-introduce historical context into metafiction and problematize the entire question of historical knowledge".[64] Hutcheon explains that historiographic metafiction

> ...refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity.[65]

Postcolonial writers have adopted and appropriated postmodern narrative techniques and ideas as tools for dismantling Eurocentric norms and strictures. According to Robert Young, this is a political move which "mark not just the cultural effects of a new stage of 'late' capitalism, but the sense of loss of European history and culture as History and Culture, the loss of their unquestioned place at the centre of the world".[66]

But this does not mean that postmodern historiographic metafiction is the only mode for recuperating or retrieving lost, suppressed selves, for remembering the violence and trauma of history, for exposing the falsity of the rhetoric of the hegemonic nation state, for giving voice to marginalized groups or national minorities and for remembering the tragedy of individual lives harried and wrecked by history, and of history harried and wrecked by

individuals. If there were multiple versions of India, multiple and diverse modes were also adopted in narrating the alternative versions of India and asserting its polyglot identity. Thus, along with the postmodern metafictions, of Rushdie, Tharoor, Sealy, Kesavan, and Chandra, we have novels like Ghosh's The Shadow Lines, Nayantara Sahagal's Rich Like Us, Rohinton Mistry's Such a Long Journey, Shauna Singh Baldwin's What the Body Remembers, Siddhartha Deb's The Point of Returnand Surface, that continued very much in the realist tradition. But whether in the postmodern metafictional or realistic modes, these novels, nonetheless, are still qualified enough to be called literary equivalent of history of the "third kind".

The power of discourse is of vital importance in any representation, and more so in the writing of history.The issue of discursive power gains added significance when writers from a postcolonial society like India attempt to represent the nation through historical fiction. Colonial as well as nationalist historians and writers have, as we have seen, often defined "India" and "Indian" monologically. Chapter 2 of this thesis attempts to examine how postcolonial Indian English Writers from the 1980s onwards have tried to offer a space for voices speaking from outside socially sanctioned narratives of the nation by exploiting the polyphonic potentialities of fiction.This chapter focuses on the narration of the nation as offered by these texts. The main argument of this chapter is that, as products of a particular historical time when the idea of the nation-state was going through a crisis of faith, these novels do not offer any celebratory account of the nation but elegiac versions of the nation. Through an alternative version of history which goes against the official and dominant discourses, the picture of the nation that emerges is also quite different from what overtly nationalistic and official powers claim it to be—homogenous, unitary and exclusive.

This chapter draws from the theoretical writings of Frantz Fanon, Fredric Jameson, and Benedict Anderson, all of whom have dealt with the relation between nation and literature, as well as from such scholars as Partha Chatterjee, Ashish Nandy and Sunil Khilnani. In his essay "The National Longing for Form" Timothy Brennan draws attention to what he calls the "nation-centeredness of the postcolonial world".[67] Nagesh Rao says: "If the postcolonial novel is to be seen as a site of resistance (in its ideological positioning within cultural institutions), its material referent and its condition of production is the postcolonial nation".[68] This relationship between the Nation and Narration (which is the title of the now

famous anthology of essays edited by Homi K. Bhabha that pioneered the debate) is immensely crucial for postcolonial writers and society in general. While thischapter discusses the significance and nation-narration nexus of postcolonial literature, it also takes note of the obvious complexities of relating literature to nationhood in any straightforward manner. The argument will be based on Partha Chatterjee's theorization of the derivativeness of the discourse of the nation, and Imre Szeman's theorization of the postcolonial nations as "zones of instability".[69] Aligning his work to the recent critiques of nationalist historiography—such as those of the Subaltern School, Chatterjee not only reveals the limits of national history but also cogently argues that nationalism in Indiais "derivative" of European nationalism, a "different discourse, yet one that is dominated by another".[70] Equally pertinent as Chatterjee is Sunil Khilnani's ideas who in his book The Idea of India considers the rhetoric of Indian nationalism, both before and after independence, as a means ofapproaching India's national history.[71] It will be seen that literature from these nations, rather than reaffirming the significance of what has been established, is often preoccupied with the task of grappling with how a nation might be forged in the midst of multiple centrifugal forces.

Nation and nationalism are complex terrains in postcolonial contexts. On the one hand, the ideas of nation and anti-colonial nationalisms are of vital importance for the postcolonial societies because they provided them the politically effective and culturally regenerative resources with which to "reclaim or imagine forms of community again, to forgecollective political identities [. . .] to challenge colonial rule".[72] But on the other hand, these very concepts came to be interrogated and vehemently contested as the illiberality and confining characteristics of postcolonial nationalism began to show its dark designs at the hands of the ruling elites after independence. A widespread sense of betrayal and discontent began to set in as the promised freedom and suffrage of anti-colonial nationalism began to fade. The postcolonial collapse is all the more apparent in India. As Ashcroft says the "national ideal of one people, so successfully championed by Nehru has never been more challenged than it has by India's size and complexity".[73]

Literatures from the postcolonial societies have vigorously participated in these debates surrounding relative benefits and problems of nation and nationalisms, debates that "often echo (but do not neatly replicate) the wider critical conflicts regarding the phenomena pointed out above—conflicts which frequentlyconcern the extent to which nation and

nationalisms ultimatelyengender lasting liberty or continued coercion, sovereignty or servitude, freedom or censorship".[74] Salman Rushdie's metaphors in Midnight's Children of the cloth with a hole at its centre and the body cracking up are instances of this disastrous fate of the postcolonial nation-state. Ghosh in The Shadow Lines depicts the inevitable end of a stable nation with the balkanizing tendencies within the nation growing stronger by the day.

Instead of simply being celebratory, major postcolonial writers have interrogated the idea of the nation, showing how we need to be aware of multiple claims and intersections that followed independence. The chapter will take into consideration Priya Joshi's point: "The English novelists of the 80s seem more elegiac over than celebratory of the nation...These are national novels, yes; but hardly national*ist* ones".[75] These novels are very much entangled in the national, but unlike the earlier nationalist novels, they do not celebrate the possibilities of the newly independent nation or the desire to look ahead for a better time. These novels do not sing paean to the glorious struggle for liberation or to the glorious moment of the birth of the nation. Instead, these writers, like Saleem in Midnight's Children, are writing an elegiac history "in the face of the smashing, the pulverizing, the irreversible discombobulation of the children of midnight" (MC 427).All of them depict a nation riddled by the maladies of modernity and despair, seething in anger and discontent.

If the nation is depicted to be sick, falling apart and a site of struggle and pain, this sickness, and painful struggle and the resultant trauma has been represented in corporeal terms. Corporeal imageries are abundantly employed by these authors in making sense of the trauma, violence, chaos, and cruelty of history and the maladies of the nation. Chapter 3 is an in-depth examination of the picture of the nation as painted on the body. In this chapter the focus is on the impact of history, in case of these novels mostly disruptive and traumatic history, on the "Body". It will be argued that like most postcolonial writers from other regions, these writers self-consciously present history as registered on the body. The focus on the body in this chapter is also justified from the fact that the body, along with space, has been a traditional field of contestation for discursive power in personal and national politics. Representations of markings on individual bodies (scars, diseases, dismemberments, mutilations, and losing of the 'body') along with representations of internalized responses to body (impaired self-image, mental ailments, ambivalence, narcissism) that we find in these texts can be read as commentaries on the state (condition, health, corruption, cruelty,

injustice) of the body politic. Instead of the traditional historiographic trope of the "body politic", which is closed, complete, definite, we find in these writers the carnivalesque, excessive, unstable bodies through which the nation can be defined in terms of diversity rather than homogeneity, and the desire of grasping and defining an essential Indian identity is undermined.

We can see an "unflinching attention to the bodily inscriptions of history"[76] in Rushdie, Mistry, Kesavan, Sahagal, Baldwin, Deb. Saleem's body, once intact and indivisible but now falling apart, cracking up;the Muslim nationalists in Looking Through Glass losing their body and disappearing due to Congress nationalist politics (the question of body and embodiment), the rape of Parwana symbolizing the overtly male and Hindu orientation of Congress politics, the circumcision of the narrator in the novel; women and their bodies as texts of communal horror and dishonour in What the Body Remembers and the other partition novel Looking Through Glass (Violent Partition histories show that map inscription was often asserted as bodily inscription); the scenes of riots, senseless murders, fear, and physical threats in Ghosh's The Shadow Lines and Deb's Point of Return (at the time of Partition and re-partition of the subcontinent), all of these point to the follies and trauma of history played out on a national scale. Bodies undergo transmutation, fetishization and gruesome corruption in these texts which mark the limits of the postcolonial nation's ability to live at peace with itself.

It will also be noted that these bodies or the corporeal imageries and metaphor are informed by grotesque realism. The idea of the grotesque is not only helpful in reading Rushdie but also the corporeal aspects in Mistry, Sealy, Kesavan and Vikram Chandra. The leaking, fissuring, severed, mutilated bodies in Rushdie, Mistry and Baldwin are literal and grotesque historical trauma left by events like the Emergency and Partition. Grotesque, carnivalesque bodies play a crucial part in The Trotter-Nama. Eugene, who begins his story with a dream of "gulab jamuns in warm syrup" (TTN 3) is as enormous as the narrative he produces. Justin Trotter gets extremely fat because of his insatiable lust for food and delicacies (colonial master as the greedy consumer); Mik Trotter's skin is turning blue (a hybrid child of colonialism—not European, not Indian, revealing the Anglo-Indians' troubled sense of belonging in the nation). In Red Earth and Pouring Rain by Vikram Chandra we see

characters changing bodily forms which expose the inability of the colonizer's desire to contain the colonized under control and containment.

Chapter 4 shifts its focus to a somewhat different direction to present an in-depth critique of this very project of representation of history in Indian English fiction. The chapter looks at the various possible and common criticisms directed against these writers in their attempts at engaging history: elitism as in Tharoor, postcolonial exoticization (as discussed by Graham Huggan) in Rushdie and Mistry, falling prey to the "packaging" game of globalized market force and mainstream perception as in the case of Deb and Baldwin, trivialization of culturally and politically valuable or significant markers.[77] This chapter will analyse the ways in which this representation of history has been done and most importantly, *how* and *if* the writers have managed to avoid the many pitfalls that such narrative representations are often prone to.

The metropolitan publishing houses and global market-force try to sell these texts from formerly colonized countries as authentic documents of postcoloniality and third world subjectivity. Such a strategy of categorizing literary texts as national allegories help the selling of books because the metropolitan readers and critics tend to read the diasporic writers with a certain horizon of expectations.In such a scenario writers like Rushdie, Tharoor, Sealy, Mistry, Baldwin Kesavan etc "automatically assumes the role of the so called cultural informants who represent East to West".[78] In other words, the texts from the so-called third world are consumed by the metropolis according to certain paradigms fixed and encouraged by the global market.The chapter also analyses the role of the critics because it is them who interpret the postcolonial text for metropolitan audiences. The critics work from within their own worldliness which tints their interpretations of the text. Thus this chapter looks at the ramifications of this politics of consumption on the production and meaning of these texts that deal with postcolonial Indian history. Along with this, the chapter also deals with the role of prizes like the Booker and Pulitzer in providing the metropolitan stamp of approval to these novels and boosting their popularity in the international arena. It will beexamined, along the lines of argument of scholars like Graham Huggan, Bishnupriya Ghosh, Deepika Bahri, etc., how far the writers themselves play to the tune of the global/metropolitan market and engage in producing exoticized images of India to be consumed by the Western public. In short, this chapter directs its focus on the historical, linguistic, ideological and locational factors of the

postcolonial condition, and their ramifications in the project of re/writing of or re/narrating history and the nation. A major part of the chapter deals with the politics of reception and consumption vis-à-vis the engagement of history in these texts.

The last chapter is a summing up of the main arguments and issues discussed in the previous chapters. It also examines the ascendancy of history and historical debates in India's public life and argues that history, as a contested terrain, remains alive and volatile in postcolonial India. The public and academic debates regarding historical issues continue to influence and shape literary representation. A few recent novels (apart from the ones discussed in this thesis) have been examined to substantiate the view that Indian English writers remain entangled in the historical while India herself go on living under the shadows and trauma of history. Therefore, the chapter takes issues with and exposes the lie to the Hegelian concept of the "end of history" (as popularized in our own time by Kojeve and Francis Fukuyama). The arguments will run on the line that these writers shatter the myth of the teleology of History, its linear progress, and also by displaying through their fictional enterprises the inadequacies and weaknesses of political progress, liberal democracy and modernity that the concept 'end of history' embraces.

In the context of postcolonial India, there are still so many stories to tell, so many stories yet to be excavated and brought to light from the darkness of dominance. Moreover, controversies and debates surrounding history which threaten the communal harmony and very often turn violent are very much real, as evident by the bloody incidents regardingthe communal riots over the dispute surrounding the Babri Masjid, riots in Gujrat, insurgency in Kashmir and the northeast part of the country etc. Therefore, as Shohat and Stam say:

> When a certain postmodernism (Lyotard's) speaks of an 'end' to metanarratives and when Fukayama talks of an 'end of history,' we must ask: precisely whose narrative and whose history is being declared at an 'end'? Dominant Europe may clearly have begun to deplete its strategic repertoire of stories, but Third World people, First World 'minorities'—women and gays and lesbians—have only begun to tell, and deconstruct, theirs.[79]

These writers fill the gap left by History by concentrating on the human suffering, trauma, rupture, cruelty that history brings to the people, because it is always the imaginative writers that shed light on the "slaughterhouse of history." The novels under the present study, offer more nuanced and insightful views regarding the many conflicts, clashes, and rifts along ethnic and communal lines in present day India. As such these novels, in their engagement with history, not only present alternative and fictional versions of history, but also appeal for rethinking Indian history, identity, and nation.

The chapter concludes with some observations regarding the changing facets of fictional representation of history in recent novels which are characterized by a more diffused kind of approach to history. The recent novels in English, while they do not totally reject the national altogether, seem to be moving away from pan-Indian nation-centric engagement, as in the case of the writers of the Rushdie generation, to a more local allegiance to people and smaller places and events.

Notes and References

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Chapter I

History and Narratives

...what is history? Is it an account of events set out and approved by a dominant culture? Or does history possess another door, other doors, to be opened by strangeness?

—Wilson Harris, The Dark Jester

[W]hat historians might call a 'fragment'--a weaver's diary, a collection of poems by an unknown poet (and to these we might add all those literatures of India that Macaulay condemned, creation myths and women's songs, family genealogies and local traditions of history)--is of central importance in challenging the state's construction of history, in thinking other histories and marking those contested spaces through which particular unities are sought to be constituted and others broken up.

—Gyanendra Pandey, "In Defence of a Fragment"

In postcolonial India, history has remained an embattled territory. From Orientalist (mis)construction to nationalist and communal appropriation and abuse, historiography in modern India is characterized with fissures, cracks and dilemmas.As such, historiography in India has been a troubled form of writing which has inherited and since retained western formal and theoretical constructs of historiography.Since the beginning of the 1980s, some historians have been appealing for and practising a mode of writing history which would not be directed by Western paradigms and frameworks of history, and at the same time would be able to give voice to the silence surrounding many areas of India's past.[1] The Subaltern School of historians have been on the forefront of this revisionist enterprise of Indian history. For example the historian Gyan Prakash calls for a mode of writing history, a "third kind of

history" that is neither recursive in its search for lost forms, nor enslaved to colonialist narratives of nation and modernity.[2]

Indian English novels from the 1980s onwards display a deep and complex engagement with history, politics, ideology, and dialectical dilemmas of Indian history from the colonial to the present times. These novels participate in a kind of historiography that is both "frankly revisionist" and "fiercely theoretical and intellectually insurrectionary".[3] In other words, the novels under the present study not only deal with history and historical events or draw on history for their subjects, but also engage themselves with serious philosophical and theoretical issues relating to historiography and history writing itself. The focus of discussion in this chapter is that these novels, which are both political and literary, can be seen as "æsthetic equivalent(s) of this third form of history, or a maverick attempt at doing history (?)".[4]This chapter presents a discussion on the philosophical issues related to history-fiction interface inherent in these novels, what kind of philosophy and theoretical ideas of history these writers adhere to, contest other strands of historical philosophy, and how through their engagement with history, they not only present alternative and fictional versions of history, but also appeal for rethinking about writing Indian history in the postcolonial context and about writing or doing history in general. While "telling" the history of postcolonial India, these novels, to paraphrase the words of R. John Williams, dramatize and reproduce revisionary historiography, and the potentially fruitful (and problematic) process of writing or "doing history".[5]

Thus an attempt has been made to see how far and to what extent and how these novels have contested received discourses of historiography, both Orientalist/colonialist as well as the nationalist. In other words, the chapter is concerned with the examination of the stylistic, philosophic and formal aspects of the texts through which this oppositional historiography comes into being. Throughout the analysis of the texts, the argument is that in colonial and postcolonial contexts, legitimized histories coexist and often collide with non-historiographic, overtly fictional forms of historical writing that perform complex epistemological and cultural functions and intervene significantly in the discourse of history. Writers like Rushdie, Tharoor, Mistry, Sealy and Kesavan employ this interventionist historiography which largely elides the interpenetration of "true" and "fictive" modes in historical writing.

It is argued that serious historical "fiction" like these novels both emerge from and return to "history"; indeed, at one level they can be regarded as alternative forms of figural representation. As Hayden White argues, history is a narrative prose discourse ordered through various modes of emplotment, argument, and ideological implication, and the historian performs an "essentially poetic act" in prefiguring and explaining historical events.[6] At another level, though, historical fictions can work precisely to neutralize or to repudiate the figurations of institutional history and can serve as alternative sources of historical knowledge for audiences ideologically resistant to the dominant narratives. In revising the troubled form of historiography, fictions involving history must inevitably draw attention to the inherited problems of historical representation, even as they re-present history and invest it with new (but not necessarily ideal) meanings.

These writers write at the moment when new theories of history undermine recorded historical facts as the individual's sole tie to history (as evinced by Collingwood, Foucault, and others). These literary narratives explore new views of history through fictional engagement with history. In Origin and Originality in Rushdie's Fiction, Martine Hennard Dutheil points out that the central idea of Midnight's Childrenis "the power of fiction to capture and invent a new reality".[7] Midnight's Childrenintroduced an upheaval in the stagnant current of IWE, and its influence on succeeding writers of fiction was far reaching. Judith Plotz calls the novel's "extravagant metafictional metaphor: narrative as chutney" Rushdie's "programmatically promiscuous contribution to the modern Indian historical novel".[8] It proved liberating and ennobling for writers like Sealy, Tharoor, Kesavan, Chandra, Sahagal, Mistry and many others who, through new methodological and philosophical interventions into the notions of history and historical representations, attempt to provide new insights for historiography.

In recent times, history and historiography have been re-defined. New critical, theoretical and philosophical insights from such diverse areas such as New Historicism, cultural theories, post-modern literary theories, and the Subaltern School of history has displaced the older forms of historical inquiry as a supposedly objective accounts of the past and have begun to emphasize the discursive modes through which the past is constituted. Postmodern and post-structuralist critics have challenged the rigidity of the history/literature

dichotomy by exposing both the narrative quality of history and the historical potentialities of all sorts of narrations. The very foundation of History, its truth-claim, its reliance on scientific teleology, pretensions and hegemonic, totalizing historical narrative of colonial and nationalistic historical narratives have come under tremendous attack throughout the globe.

Conventional wisdom regarded history and narrative as two different genres. But contemporary scholars like Louis Mink, Dominick LaCapra, and Hayden White etc. have emphasized the close link between the two. Hayden White, as recently as 1999 in Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect, claims "historical discourse" is an "interpretation of the past" which literary critics are as capable of assessing as historians.[9] Because history writing relies on the same type of narrative linear storytelling, the perceived "opposition between fact and fiction is abolished;" or "the contract" between the real and the imaginary is "dissolved".[10] Speaking about the narrative quality of history, he argues in Tropics of Discourse (1978) that "historians believe their narratives to be objective, but because itinvolves structure their narration cannot escape textuality".[11] The inescapable textual nature of any piece of written history exposes its narrativity, blurring genre-tied notions of fact and fiction and openingthe possibility of reading all sorts of texts as potential histories. If history uses the same "tropics of discourse" as what has been labelled as fiction (novels, stories and so on), we are presented witha common narrative ground for both genres. This chapter underlines the crucial fact that this commonality not only relativisesthe factuality of history, but also recovers the potential historicity of fiction.

In the context of India, this crisis of historiography gave shape to the search for alternative historical discourse which could reveal the inadequacies of the continuing modular notions of Indian history, and could expose the limitations and lies of Indian bourgeoisie nationalism, the official elite versions of history, arguing that the whole "nationalist" project was fundamentally flawed. In the name of "progress" and "modernity", the nationalists, after 1947, had imposed an oppressive centralising state on the "fragments" that comprise Indian society. From the late 1970s and early 80s, both novels and historiography have attempted to think around or beyond the modular form of the nation-state, in the recuperation or retrieval of a different form of writing about the past.

In the previous chapter we have outlined the weaknesses, biases, gaps and silences in Indian historiography produced by both the British and the nationalists. As is evident from that discussion, there are these silence-filled spaces that dot the writing of postcolonial Indian history. They point us to spaces that (Indian) historiography has thus far needed to deem as being exterior to its interests.As Judith Plotz argues:

> ...The construction of India...both on the part of the imperial British elite and of pre and post-independence elites has involved the search for unitary metaphors, single narrative...Twentieth century Indian historiography has also constructed a single vision of progress towards national self-consciousness and integration.[12]

Writers of fiction also, more or less, remained trapped in this vicious circle. Early and middle 20thcentury produced similar unitary narratives through "a largely realistic fiction of Indian nationality symbolized by representative persons...representative towns and valleys [and] representative structures".[13] Writers like Rao and Desani made commendable attempt at bringing novelty of form and style in their novels. But despite such occasional novelty, IWE, in general, had conformed to the dominant realist-mimetic mode. While there has been much resistance to the English self-representation and representation of India by adopting the bourgeois novel without questioning its underlying ideological premises, Indian writers co-opted the western paradigms. Paranjape has characterized the conservative post-independence Indian novels in English as "bourgeois in both form and content, liberal in outlook, but implicitly accepting the *status-quo.* In all cases, the form is placid, more or less in the realist mode, with round or flat characters, and written in a proper, non-deviant, pretty English".[14]

In contrast, much post-Emergency, and especially post-Midnight's Children work in IWE has moved away from these dominant trends and taken to a road that is radically different from the earlier generation of writers in many aspects, and especially in their treatment of history. In this regard, these new writers reveal the disillusionment of the unitary idea of the nation and nationalist version of history so dominant until then. The nationalist historiography and the idea of a unitary India or the authority of the nation-state came under tremendous pressure in the 1980s, the decade that coincide with the emergence of the writers

with whom this study is concerned. As pointed out by Neelam Srivastava, "This breakdown began with the National Emergency (1975-7) and was further threatened by the rise to prominence of an alternative national ideology, Hindutvá, based on the supremacy of Hindu religion and culture".[15] As mentioned by Srivastava, these two events become a "key focus" of a number of novels written during this period: Midnights' Children, The Satanic Verses(Rushdie), The Shadow Lines (Ghosh), The Great Indian Novel(Tharoor), Such A Long Journey, A Fine Balance (Mistry), A Suitable Boy (Seth), Rich Like Us (Sahagal) etc.

In their critical attitude towards the validity of the nation-state and the "frankly revisionist" and "insurrectionary".[16] attitude towards dominant trends of history and historiography, both these novels and contemporary historiography practised by the Subaltern Studies historians show interesting parallels. Speaking of these parallels, John Mee observes:

> Historiography and the novels are tied together as genres which continually return to figure the Indian nation as the site of an incomplete or fractured modernity. The desire to find some kind of third form of writing.... to reproduce this fracturing not as a grievous lack in the nation but as something different or as a supplement which challenges the authority of its master-narratives of nation and modernity, has been as much a part of the novel -- at least since Rushdie – as it has been part of historiography —at least since Subaltern Studies.[17]

Thus, both the Subaltern Studies historians and the novelists of the 80s complemented one another in their attempts in countering both Western (colonial) and neocolonial or bourgeois nationalist ways of representing history, "perhaps even to 'provincializing Europe', and find new ways of narrating Indian pasts (history)".[18]

Midnight's Childrenby Salman Rushdie became a trendsetter in many ways. It rejected the colonial, Orientalist, and overtly nationalist models of historiography by an emphatic return to the form of the traditional Indian epic. The novel adopted a self-conscious blending of the mythic and realistic modes which rejects mimesis and suggests "the fragmentary character of historical reconstructions".[19] Midnight's Children demonstrated the effectiveness of such strategies in narrativizing the complexities of postcolonial India. It is through

postcolonial strategies of narrativization of history that postcolonial narratives such as Midnight's Children, The Great Indian Novel, The Trotter-Namaand Red Earth and Pouring Rainare able to present the necessarily fragmentary and fragmented histories of India.

Gyanendra Pandey, one of the most important historian associated with the Subaltern School, put forwarded the idea of the "fragmentary" vision of history—an idea that found its strongest expression in the literary field, especially in recent Indian English novels. Against the grand teleology of colonial historiography and the prescriptive and monologic nationalist historiographies, Pandey posits the importance of those "fragments" of history—the alternative archive of memory, myths, orality, legends—history from the subaltern sphere—that make room for forgotten, neglected and repressed histories. In Rushdie's novel Midnight's Children, the fragmentariness of history and the provisionality of all historical representation are shown in a number of ways. The image of the perforated sheet is recurringly used by Rushdie to emphasize the point. Diverse characters and groups of people belonging to the subaltern class provide an alternative version to socio-political events and developments. Tai's and Pan-chewer's oral history in Midnight's Children, the paan-waala in Such a Long Journey, Eugene telling history while drinking in The Trotter-Nama provide such alternative archives of history by utilizing the non-historical "fragments" of history.

Tai has no concept of India but a strong sense of Kashmir and its antiquity: "I have watched the mountains being born; I have seen emperors die. [...] I saw that Isa, that Christ, when he came to Kashmir. Smile, smile, it is your history I am keeping in my head. Once it was set down in old lost books" (MC 16). Tai's version of oral history (with a reference to a now lost authoritative written version) is not paraded as authentically Indian or Kashmiri, but it is nevertheless a legitimate version. Historian Tai claims to be an eyewitness to all epochs, by authority of his enormous age, blurring the boundaries of centuries and turning history into legend and myth where historical accounts are legitimized by their allegorical potential or imaginative truth value. Kashmir is turned into a mythical location beyond any linear space-time continuum, which is the antithesis of Aadam Aziz's Heidelberg-imported clock-measured time.

Like the Subaltern historians, novelists like Rushdie, Seal, Mistry and Kesavan are concerned with the voice of the masses. These writers display an insistence urge to recover and represent the subaltern. Rushdie's novel, for example, emphasizes the masses, who are

supposed to be the nation in this "mass fantasy" and "collective fiction". In Midnight's Children, the mythical and legendary are represented as the domain of the subaltern, for example, Tai's and the paan-chewers' mythic history. The masses are, however, an ambivalent part of the nation. In the Independence scene, the masses are repeatedly referred to as "the many-headed monster" (MC 115). Shiva is another subaltern character in the novel who reacts with contempt when Saleem proposes the Midnight Conference along liberal democratic ideals. Shiva represents the less palatable side of the subalterns which frustrates bourgeois benevolence. Even though Shiva is mainly a destructive force in Midnight's Children, however, the text's sympathy is not entirely weighed against him. He speaks from a position which is hard to contradict from Saleem's middle-class location. Shiva embodies the many-headed monster which irritates liberal nationalist discourse, which in turn tries to keep the masses at bay. He can be made to stand for the Indian nation-state's failure to curb inequality and poverty. His deprivation contradicts the idea of the Indian nation with a sense of comradeship and equality. By charting the many failures of the postcolonial nation-state, these writers tread the same road of the Subaltern historians. In the manifesto of the Subaltern historiography, Ranajit Guha proposed that this new historical enterprise would attempt to study the historic failure of the nation to come into its own.

In Mukul Kesavan's novel, we have the rarely-told history of the role of the Muslim nationalists in the Freedom Struggle of India, and their historic betrayal by the Hindutva-ridden Congress politics. The Muslim nationalists are the subaltern figures are not acknowledged by the Congress as true nationalists. Rohinton Mistry's novel Such a Long Journey abounds with subaltern characters whose stories expose the failure of the utopian dream of a stable, harmonious nation. Mistry's 1996 novel A Fine Balance uses realism to present a political critique of the Emergency, portrayed as a period of great suffering for the lower castes and the dispossessed.

A substantial part of the investigation in this chapter is on the methodological and philosophical aspect of the texts in dealing with historical issues. The emphasis is put on exploring the narrativity of historical writing in general and the close interface of history-fiction in these texts in particular. It is important to add, however, that just because both are narratives does not mean that history is somehow "dissolved" into fiction, into a general relativism and radical uncertainty about our pasts. On the contrary, our constitution as

temporal beings can only be brought to expression in narrative form: "the historicity of human experience can be brought to language only as narrativity".[20] Moreover, this narrativity can be articulated only by the crossed interplay between history and fiction. In other words, both referential modes are necessary for our historicity—also translated as historicality, or 'within-time-ness'—to be brought into language. This intersection between fiction and history is a vital exchange, emphasizing the narrativity of history, while at the same time drawing attention to the mimesis inherent in fiction.

This chapter examines the ways in which these writers, through narrativization of history, not only problematize the traditional concept of fiction and history but also work out alternative strategies to narrativize the history of India. The chapter tries to bring out the qualities of the novels as ironic fiction linked to European and Indian modes of representing Indian history and as historical parallel capable of engaging at multiple levels the memory and experience of postcolonial Indian reality. Starting with Midnight's Children along with a number of its successors, the chapter will be focussing on the methodological and philosophical aspects of these novels through which they engage with the problems of the historical representation, and of received/dominant versions of historiography arguing that the models of history adopted by the novelists concerned tend to subvert and question the dominant notions of historiography emanating from the West, notably the idea of linear progress and objectivity of historical truth.

By foregrounding the question of the interrelationships between narrativity and historiography, these writers disrupt the teleology of objective History. This theoretical practice of blurring of boundaries between fiction and history and its refutation of the totalitarian constructs of modernity (e.g. rationality, world history, nationalism)allow the voicing of a number of discursive and ideological spaces which were previously silenced or misrepresented.The revisitation of the past that seems to be a primary concern of Indian novels of the 1980s and 1990s effects an anti-philosophy of history, by questioning the way meaning has been assigned to past events in nationalist historical writing. These novels provide an alternative mode of rethinking the Indian past as well as emphasizing the role of memory, myth, and other non-historiographic modes of writing history in general.

In the first section that follows, we shall examine the role of individual as well as collective memory in re-writing of history, and disrupting the notion of Western objectivity

and teleology of hegemonic history. The next section deals with the engagement of Indian history through the non-historiographic mode of myth. After that we go on to see the generic forms of the various texts under the present study. This section argues that it is not merely the much-glorified magic-realist, fabulative texts (Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie, The Trotter-Nama by I. Allan Sealy, The Great Indian Novel by Shashi Tharoor, Red Earth and Pouring Rain by Vikram Chandra, and Looking Through Glass by Mukul Kesavan) but also the so called realist texts like those by Rohinton Mistry and Nayantara Sahgal that intervene effectively into the discourse of history and resist the dominant discourse of the Master Narratives of History. The last section of the chapter discusses a few Partition texts to see how imaginative writings like these fill up the gaps and silences of objective, official history. This last section also sums up the main arguments of the chapter regarding the issue of narrativity of history and history-fiction interface.

I.

In a number of essays in hisImaginary Homelands, Rushdie points out the provisional and arbitrary nature of reality and 'truth'. He highlights the fact that reality is something which textually created through the practice of memory, history and fiction. The notion that reality is not fixed and absolute, but a construct, with different, often competing versions is subscribed to by not just Rushdie but almost all the writers under the present study—Amitav Ghosh, I. Allan Sealy, Shashi Tharoor, and the more recent writer Siddhartha Deb. The novels by these writers depict alternative histories of India—histories constructed by means of individual experience and through personal and community memory. In constructing historical reality through individual and, therefore, varied personal experiences, they highlight the textual reality of history, nation and identity. These novels contest the hegemony of traditional objective histories by producing historical versions based on individual experiences and memories of the protagonists, thereby pitting "*historical truth*" against"*memory's truth*". Consequently, the novels posit the idea that multiple histories can be produced out of the same historical facts. The versions which employ the multiple plurality of individual memory edit 'historical truth' by revealing gaps and silencesin the authorized, official versions.

Rushdie points out that since reality/history has its own versions, it is crucial that we must be alert to who is saying what and to what purpose. An artist's version of reality may differ from a politician's. Rushdie says that "we remake the past to suit our present purposes, using memory as our tool".[21] In other words, we remember and write in order to know and have some control over the production of our present.Rushdie in Midnight's Children produces a chutnified version on Indian history where memory and recorded fact merge together to disrupt the idea of conventional history. For Rushdie, these new rules simulate the function of memory and make a statement about history and how it is approached, viewed, and interpreted. Likewise, Sealy's The Trotter-Nama, Ghosh's novel The Shadow Lines and Deb's The Point of Return also deal with important upheavals in a people's *remembered* history, and yet, that reflected through the *forgotten* lives of individuals and communities. Memory and the process of recalling memories produce individual histories that overlapsome aspects of recorded history yet remain unique, individual versions of history.

For Rushdie, truth is always provisional. In the essay "Imaginary Homelands" he writes, about the elusiveness of memory and the material and immaterial things like dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, old films, small victories, all kinds of people upon which memory builds itself. Midnight's Childrenis a novel that fully illustrates exemplifies his idea of reality and role of memory. Here he recreates the history of the country from the subjective andfragmented memory of his narrator: "It is memory's truth ... and only a madman would prefer someone else's version to his own" (MC 25).History of India is read through Saleem's family album. It is in the light of this connection that we need to read the following passage:

> Who am I? What am I? My answer: I am the sum total of everything that went before me, of all I have seen done, of everything done-to-me. I am everyone everything whose being-in-the-world affected was affected by mine. I am anything that happens after I've gone which would not have happened if I had not come. Nor am I particularly exceptional in this matter; each "I", every one of the now-six-hundred-million-plus of us, contains a similar multitude. I repeat for the last time: to understand me, you'll have to swallow a world. (MC 370)

Born at the stroke of midnight of August 15th, 1947, the hour of India's coming into being as an independent country, Saleem, in his own words, got inextricably linked to the fate of the nation:

> I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country. For the next three decades, there was to be no escape ... And there are so many stories to tell, too many, such an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumours, so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane. (MC 1)

There is a constant interface between the personal and the historical throughout the narrative. In the process, both spheres get transformed or transmuted. If Saleem's life "has been transmuted into grotesquery by the irruption into it of history" (MC57), history itself, in the personal version of Saleem, becomes a promiscuous mixture of fantasy, magic, miracles, rumours, anecdotes, mythological lore, satire, and comedy. The following passage sheds light on Saleem's connection with history:

> How, in what terms, may the career of a single individual be said to impinge on the fate of a nation? I must answer in adverbs and hyphens: I was linked to history both literally and metaphorically, both actively and passively, in what our (admirably modern) scientists may term 'mode of connection' composed of 'dualistically-combined configurations' of the two pairs of opposed adverbs given above. This is why hyphens are necessary: actively-literally, passively-metaphorically, actively-metaphorically, and passively-literally, I was inextricably entwined with my world. (MC238)

This passage reveals the diverse character of Saleem's involvement with history. As an embodiment of history, Saleem is no more than just a passive receptacle of what has happened and is happening around him. In this passive guise, he is battered by the relentless progress and onslaught of history. He suffers dismantling, loses his magical powers and

potency, and finally cracks up under its tremendous burden. On the other hand, he is also placed at the centre of all the happenings in the novel, he gives history shape and meaning, which makes him into an active agent. In this active part, Saleem takes on the role of a historian who writes his own version or "memory's truth". This active part of him becomes the nucleus of the critique of Indian history and historiography and the problematizing of the historical discourse.

In the role of a historian, Saleem, like the traditional historians, aspires to produce some kind of a totalization of the past, in which he can provide continuities and missing links. He wants to write a complete and coherent account. Against the "halal" view of family history where "one is supposed to swallow and digest only the permitted parts of it...drained of their redness," Saleem wants to put everything in his version down to its last detail, "letting no blood escape from the body of the tale" (MC 59). Pitted against this desire to produce a coherent and total picture of the past is the realization of its impossibility. Saleem knows all too well that all historical knowledge is provisional and relative, and no matter what claims we make for their completeness, all historical accounts are bound to be incomplete and fragmentary. It is suggested that historians work within limitations which come in the way of perceiving reality in its totality. In this regard, the metaphor of the perforated sheet in the novel is a fitting one for the fragmentary nature of historical knowledge:

> ...and above all the ghostly essence of that perforated sheet, which doomed my mother to learn to love a man in segments, and which condemned me to see my own life –its meanings, its structures—in fragments also... (MC 107).

Rushdie illustrates the fragmentary nature of the historian's recreation of the past by expounding the idea of history reclaimed through memory. But, since memory can be inaccurate, unreliable, and extravagant, any historical recreation based on it can only carry partial reliability. Saleem says:

> 'I told you the truth,' I say yet again, 'Memory's truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies, also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its

heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events; and no sane human being ever trusts someone else's version more than his own' (MC 211).

Rushdie's fictional recreation of history from memory rather than objective facts is an example of what Hayden Whitehas called the imaginative task of historicization. White has argued that historical narratives are linguistic artifacts, rhetorical constructs. Therefore thecontents of historical narratives are as much invented asfound. Due to their partially fictional nature, most historical sequences can beemplotted in different ways to create different interpretations and meanings.[22] Rushdie's alternative accounts of India and the origins of itsvarious ethnic groups use the fictive quality of historiography to produce alternative interpretations of the past. Beset with the problems of provisionality of truth and unreliability of memory, Saleem, nonetheless, works eagerly to write a meaningful history of the nation.

Since all historical narratives are provisional and fragmentary, and are created out of a process of selection, omission, alteration and exaggeration, there is always the possibility of errors and mistakes. In his eagerness to complete his account before his fissured body cracks up, Saleem turns into an unreliable narrator/historian as he makes errors and mistakes. Introducing these errors into the story, Rushdie mimics the workings of memory and how a person's memory creates a reality that may not conform to recorded historical facts, yet is as valid for that person as those recorded facts. The following passage from Midnight's Children invokes one of the many intentional errors in the text, bringing it to the foreground and imploring the reader to situate this error in the realm of a historical reality created by human memory:

> Reality is a question of perspective.... Re-reading my work, I have discovered an error in chronology. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date. But I cannot say, now, what the actual sequence of events might have been; in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time. Does one error invalidate the entire fabric? Am I so far gone, in my desperate need for meaning, that I'm prepared to distort everything to re-write

the whole history of my times purely in order to place myself in a central role? Today, in my confusion, I can't judge. I'll have to leave it to others (MC198).

Saleem invokes his own memory of events, Gandhi's death in this instance, as a true and valid account of his life regardless of that which is recorded as fact and is considered the one "true" history. Thus, Rushdie's narcissistic narration enables and invokes new rules of literature to describe (while avoiding prescription) an alternate way of approaching history. Carl Becker said that "history is the memory of things said and done".[23] In Rushdie's novel we see a personalized history reflected through the individual memory of Saleem Sinai. The individual nature of history as highlighted by a narcissistic narration that relies on memory undermines traditional forms of history as a unity of recorded fact.

Re-imagining history fills in the gaps of a person's memory, in a manner that may or may not concur with recorded fact. But memory is unreliable, and mistakes are bound to happen when memory serves as the guide. Saleem describes the inevitable gaps and errors in memory and proceeds to re-imagine his history in a manner that provides meaning to him. To emphasize this point, Rushdie enables Saleem's narration to catalogue the history of Saleem's grandparents through memories that cannot possibly exist due to his forthcoming birth, 32 years in the future. Saleem reminds the reader that "Most of what matters in your life takes place in your absence" (MC282). Although not present for the early lives of his grandparents, he "remembers" their life stories, often by accessing his sense of smell (smell being the sense with the strongest link to memory). Saleem consistently reminds the reader of the necessity of re-imagining history in order to have a concept of one's own past and even re-imagines the points from which he was absent. Saleem consciously remarks on several of his historical "errors" to emphasize the re-imagining of individual histories that comprise a new reality, which serves as an alternate to historical fact.

As such what Rushdie tries to offer is an alternative, deeply personal, indeed prescriptive account of Indian history (all six hundred and thirty million versions, according to Midnight's Children), and Saleem reminds the reader that individual perception as created by memory is an illusion that ultimately comprises a truth for that individual, and that this personal version is no less valid than any other recognized version just because it is personal.

Amitav Ghosh's insistence on relying almost entirely on different characters' personal memories to recall a riot in Dhaka and the narrator's search for meaning and redemption through a personal reconstruction of past events in The Shadow Lines, and I. Allan Sealy's view "People want to hear stories so you make them up" (TTN527) reflect the same outlook on history and historical representation, and the nexus between history and narratives as Rushdie's novel. It must be noted however that while Rushdie and Ghosh emphasises personal memory, Sealy deals with cultural memory to re-write and re-imagine the history of a community in an attempt to "historicize" it from historical erasure. Saleem's view that only a madman would believe another man's story than his own, finds its echo in Ghosh's narrator and in one of the central character Tridib. Ghosh highlights imagination as a means of transcending hegemonic official representations. The narrator's cousin, Tridib, urges him to use his imagination. In Tridib's view, everyone lives in a story; it is just a question of which story one chooses.[24]

In Ghosh's The Shadow Lines, the unnamed narrator embarks on a search for "roots and reasons" and "for the meaning of violence through memories of migration".[25] Through his own personal memories and of that of other people's, he delves into some forgotten events, specifically the "minor riots" within India. Through scraps of multiple, overlapping, fragmentary memories and nuggets of information, Ghosh "attempts to reveal the manner in which these riots are quite deliberately wiped out of national memory, because they serve to undermine and disrupt the dominant historiography's neat narrative of battles with foreign enemies, located outside national borders, and fought with the methodology and rationality of organized warfare".[26] As a child, the narrator could not see the connection of his experience during the school bus journey in Calcutta to the riot in Dhaka, some hundreds of miles away, which killed Tridib in 1964. As he recalls,

> I believed in the reality of space; I believed that distance separates, that it is a corporeal substance; I believed in the reality of nations and borders...I could not have perceived that there was something more than an incidental connection between those events of which I had a brief glimpse from the window of that bus, in Calcutta, and those other events in Dhaka, simply because Dhaka was in another country (TSL 219).

It took the narrator fifteen years to comprehend these connections and to make sense of history, after a long painful journey through a maze of memories supplemented by other archival information. He says:

> It was thus, sitting in the airconditioned calm of an exclusive library that I began on my strangest journey: a voyage into a land outside space, an expanse without distance; a land of looking glass events (TSL 224).

For the narrator, his imaginary reconstruction of the past is more truthful than the actual present. He feels the urge to live through other people's stories. He comes to realize that one can only know the world through words. He emphasizes the importance of narrative reconstruction of memories. This impulse for narrativizing the past is opposed to the worldview of his cousin Ila who cannot see any reason for dwelling in the past and the imagination. For her words had nothing to do with experiences and excitements stored and felt by her senses. Then there is the way that official discourses, like the newspapers, narrate the world.

Ghosh exposes the ways in which national discourses tend to erase or suppress events of history that threaten to undermine the constructed myth of a stable, homogeneous nation. For instance, the national discourse of the official reports in newspapers creates gaps, because the words and the external reality they refer to do not correspond precisely. The newspapers exclude the riots from the national narrative in order to serve its interests:

> Party slips and party congresses and elections poured out their eloquence in newspapers and histories [...] as though words could never exhaust their significance. But for these other things we can only use words of description when they happen and then fall silent, for to look for words of any other kind would be to give them meaning, and that is a risk we cannot take any more than we can afford to listen to madness. (TSL228)

Against such false yet dominant official truths, writers like Rushdie, Ghosh and Sealy construct another reality through a personal version of historical truth reclaimed through memory, mythopoeia, satire, magic realism, and other ways of narrativizing history. In the case of Ghosh in The Shadow Lines, Tuomas Huttunen says,

> ...he acknowledges that the world is a narrative and discursive social construction where alternative narrative realities and ideologies clash and unite. This is evident in his foregrounding of oral stories in The Shadow Lines, which examines the multiple narrative realities and the construction of personal and national identities out of these realities.[27]

That history was and still is used as a source of power by the state "by altering the past to fit its present needs,"[28] that reality and historical truth are narrative constructions is something that these writers constantly emphasize. T. N. Dhar, while discussing the novelistic intervention into history to unseat the dominant, official historiography, says:

> It is now widely known that both in the developed and less developed countries of the world, one of the dominant impulses which led the novelists to history-writing through fiction was their dissatisfaction with the attitude of the historians towards power-brokers.[29]

The writers of fiction underline the often suppressed truth that there is always an opposition between the official and non-official views of the past. Rushdie, Ghosh, Sealy and Deb have chosen to use the novel of memory as a weapon to combat the forgetfulness that the exercise of such official, hegemonic power induces. Rushdie explains it by saying:

> Writers and politicians are natural rivals. Both groups try to make the word in their own images; they fight for the same territory. And the novel is one way of denying the official, politicians' version of truth.[30]

Like the narrator in The Shadow Lines, Saleem, in Midnight's Childrendeals with this issue by referring to contradictions in the accounts of India and Pakistan, especially in their accounts of war. Saleem records their conflicting versions of happening in the Rann of Kutch, and comments on the untruth of the newspaper reports which appeared in Pakistan:

> Hidden behind newspaper reports--- DASTARDLY INDIAN INVASION REPELLED BY OUR GALLANT BOYS--- the truth about General Zulfikar became, in the papers, INNOCENT SOLDIERS MASSACRED BY INDIAN FAUJ (MC 337).

Saleem also writes that, in spite of his best efforts, he could not say what really happened during the Indo-Pak war of 1965:

> Important to concentrate on good hard facts. But what facts? One week before my eighteenth birthday, on August 8th, did Pakistani troops in civilian clothing cross the cease-fire line in Kashmir and infiltrate the Indian sector, or did they not? In Delhi, Prime Minister Shastri announced 'massive infiltration...to subvert the state'; but here is Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan's Foreign Minister, with his riposte: 'We categorically deny any involvement in the rising against tyranny by the indigenous people of Kashmir' (MC 338).

Within India, Rushdie illustrates his viewpoint with reference to Mrs. Gandhi's emergency rule, when history became synonymous with official handouts. The dichotomous versions of the known and suppressed history which the time engendered are suggested metaphorically through the parting of Mrs. Gandhi's hair, which was part white and part black. The white represented the one made visible by the official media: "public, visible, documented, a matter for historians". That is why Saleem says that the black part "being secret macabre untold, must be a matter for us" (MC 406). Here Rushdie implies that revisions of history are not necessitated by methodological inadequacies and imperfections alone, but also by the distortions of those manipulators who use history as a source of power for dominance. Power-play and political ideologies in the production of historiography, therefore, erases those

people, communities, and events which threaten to disrupt the neat idea of a unitary and stable national identity.

Ghosh's novel challenges and disproves the doctored documents of India's history and politics and, in the process breaks many myths of the nation. The Shadow Lines attempts "a reconstruction of 'public' history through a reconstruction of the 'private' or personal history".[31] Such a narrative reconstruction with the aid of personal memory foregrounds the most violent phase of Indian nationalism against genteel domesticity, and engages with the silences and amnesia of the dominant patriarchal nationalism which tries to cover up many gory and blood-stained chapters of political conflicts.

One instance of this personal reconstruction of public history occurs when Malik, a restaurant owner of Bangladeshi origin in England, dismisses the 1964 riots (in which Tridib lost his life) as insignificant compared with the war, but is forced into silence by Robi who could not suppress his emotion and speaks about the incident that had traumatized their lives. Ghosh focuses on this incident to unmask the distortions and suppressions in nationalist histories, to tell the untold stories. The perfunctory coverage of the event by English language newspapers calls attention to the complicity of the written discourse in the clever erasures in the state versions. Aligning wars with nations and documented history, Ghosh locates riots in the people, reserved in personal memory, saying: "they were subject to a logic larger than themselves [governments], for the madness of the riot is a pathological inversion, but also therefore a reminder, of that indivisible sanity that binds people to each other independently of their governments" (TSL 230).

A number of Subaltern historians focus their attention on the representation of riots in Indian historiography. Riots also figure prominently in Indian English novels. Shahid's Amin, a historian associated with the Subaltern School, wrote extensively on how some events figure prominentl;y in history while the less-palatable ones are erased or suppressed from the realm of history. His ideas throw crucial insights in reading about these issues in novels like Ghosh's The Shadow Lines and Kesavan's Looking Through Glass. In Event, Metaphor, Memory Shahid Amin explores the different ways a certain event was reconfigured within nationalist histories of India and local memories, over a period of seventy years. Amin is particularly interested in deconstructing certain aspects of the "master saga" of Indian nationalist struggles, which, according to him, are built around the retelling of certain well-

known and memorable events. The significance of nationalist narratives lies in their elaborate and heroic setting down, or "figurating", the triumph of good over evil. Amin shows how, in the episode of Chauri Chaura, the historical significance attached to an event makes the facts of the case cease to matter: "Forever a lesson to be learnt, the 'riot' could no longer be accorded a narrative past. It could, at most, refer to past imperfection; in the Congress as an organization, in the nationalist public more generally".[32] The use of the term "riot" as applied to events such as these is present in Ghosh's novel and in Seth's A Suitable Boy as well.

In Looking Through Glass, there are several instances as seen from the point of view of the middle class. Nationalist historians had defined subaltern rebellions as spontaneous, lacking in political consciousness, and without a clearly identifiable leadership (the raid of the Madhuban police station in the novel). The Subaltern Studies historians suggested reading these counter-insurgency texts against the grain. The antagonism between the peasant rebels and the colonial authorities who were charged with containing them was clearly present in the discourse which the colonial administrators used to characterize the peasants: "The antagonism is indeed so complete and so firmly structured that from the terms stated for one it should be possible, by reversing their values, to derive the implicit terms of the other".[33]

We see such representation in the case of a riot in Ghosh's novel The Shadow Lines, in which the character May describes to the narrator how his cousin Tridib was killed many years earlier in Dhaka, trying to save an old man being attacked by a Muslim mob: "Tridib ran into the mob, and fell upon their backs. He was trying to push his way through to the old man, I think. Then the mob dragged him in. He vanished. I could only see their backs. It took less than a moment. Then the men began to scatter. I picked myself up and began to run towards them. The men had melted away, into the gullies. When I got there, I saw three bodies. They were all dead. They'd cut Khalil's stomach open. The old man's head had been hacked off. And they'd cut Tridib's throat, ear to ear" (TSL 250–1). We note how the 'mob' is not individualized, and is portrayed as a murderous, anonymous entity. The irrationality of its violence is vividly evoked by the mutilated bodies they leave behind. More than once, Ghosh evokes mob violence as a terrifying, alien force, whose cries reflect "the authentic sound of chaos" (TSL 201). In another 'riot' episode, the mob is seen by the narrator as animal-like: "As I watched, one limb of the mob broke away from the main body and snaked out towards us" (TSL 203). The narrator of The Shadow Lines considers this fear of the

communal mob to be unique to the subcontinent. Neelam Srivastava says: "In this sense, then, writing about the riot in South Asia needs to take on board Foucault's concept of the 'universal singularity' of the event, because it is 'without analogy' and yet at the same time a defining characteristic of the South Asian political landscape".[34]

A society's dealings with the past can no longer be easily divided into ''history proper,'' identified with the work of professional historians, and ''non-history'' or ''improper history,'' identified with all the rest. We have seen that history constructed out of individual, fragmentary, unreliable memory is one way of doing ''improper history''. History retold or remembered by a community "shipwrecked by history"[35] has tremendous significance for the cultural existence and assertion of that community, as shown by Sealy in his novel The Trotter-Nama. Johan Huizinga defined history as the symbolic forming in which a society takes account of its past.[36] This ''accounting for'' takes place not only through historiography, but also through a wide range of other activities: commemorative ceremonies, museum visits, apologies on behalf of states, meetings of re-enactment societies, watching historical films and reading historical fiction, family gatherings and genealogical research. The novels by Sealy and Baldwin are just such re-enactments of the forgotten history of the Anglo-Indians and the tragic story of the Sikhs caught up in the catastrophe of the Partition respectively. Contrary to the individual frame of memory, these texts utilize the other form of memory called "cultural memory".

Cultural memory foregrounds what Paul Connerton has called ''those acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible''[37] and thus opens the way for an analysis of the artifacts and cultural processes through which shared memories are shaped and disseminated in the modern age. In the case of Sealy, the cultural memory of the Anglo-Indians as narrated in the novel The Trotter-Nama, does not display nostalgia for the glorious past or any utopian vision. In The Trotter-Nama, Sealy presents a fabulative history of India unreliably narrated by Eugene, the Seventh Trotter, a painter, and a chronicler of his Anglo-Indian family history, from its founding by Justin Trottrer, also called the Great Trotter (a French mercenary soldier) in the eighteenth century through to the present day. Significantly, Eugene paints in a mock-Mughal style—a style in which perspective is often distorted, reflected in his role as historian. His story (and history) is centered on the predictably-named Trotter family seat of Sans Souci near Nakhlau (another name for Lucknow).

His other strategy is to co-opt and appropriate, and thereby subvert a great variety of historical texts and personalities (Major General Claude Martin, Colonel James Skinner, Henry Louis Vivien Derozio, Sir Henry Gidney, Frank Anthony etc), and canonical fictional texts—both colonial/European and non-European (Kim, The Shah Nama). Through this sustained and brilliantly intelligent co-option and subversion of texts, events and personalities Sealy's narrator revives the memory of both the pain of historical amnesia and also the achievement and contributions of the community.

Warren Hastings is said to have first used the term Anglo-Indian very early to denote Europeans living in India. In the early 17th century Europeans of assorted origins made their way to India. Indeed the period 1761-1819 has been described as the heyday of military adventurism. Justin Aloysius Trotter was one such adventurer who came to India dreaming of adventure, power and riches. These Europeans first co-habited with and later married Indian women, often imprisoned or widowed in war, sometimes well born. Their descendents could be found at every level of society, distinguishing themselves in war, trade and culture.

The change of attitudes, the discrimination and the ghettoising of the community by the British came with the opening of the Suez Canal and Macaulay's Minute on Education—the first made possible a free flow of brides from England, and the latter created an indigenous population capable of manning essential services in the language of the ruling race. Early generations of Anglo-Indians, like the generation of Justin Trotter were powerful people who enjoyed status and privileges. It is with Mik's generation that the Anglo-Indian identity and a racially divided society were born. Through Mik, we enter another unrecounted history of betrayal and abandonment that the Anglo-Indians had to go through during the colonial times. Despite his many sacrifices and loyal military service to the British colonial mission, Mik lost his job and the rights and privileges commonly enjoyed by the Europeans. The process of neglect and dispossession that started had to do with the fact that they were country-born, had different skin complexion, and so they were not quite Europeans as to enjoy the privilege accorded to pure-blooded colonialists.

Sealy intends to not only speak out but correct the abuse and wrongs done to the Anglo-Indian community by the pure-blooded, white skinned British. He writes them into almost all the major events of Indian history. This not only gives the Anglo-Indians a chance to see them in new historical perspective and regain the subjectivity denied to them by the

British. In one of the most memorable portion of the novel Sealy offers a fresh new look at the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 where he imaginatively writes the Trotters into the thick of the bloody events of the Mutiny where Anglo-Indians helped the British in crushing it. Placing the Anglo-Indians in this crucial event history displaces the British imperial myth of the "Indian Mutiny". Requested by the British officer, Mik goes to crush the rebellion, which he does but himself dies later from a bullet wound. The rest of the bloody siege of the Residency, the bloodshed and mayhem in Nakhlau, and the ultimate crushing of the rebellion is seen from the point of view of the Trotter family. Sealy records the valour of the Anglo-Indians and also the bravery of the boys of the La Martiniere School which was occupied by the rebels. The Ilbert Bill which was introduced by the British Parliament after the Rebellion evoked mixed reactions among the Anglo-Indians and we see the heated debate among the Trotters regarding the Bill.

We see the rise of Indian National Congress and the growing tide of nationalistic fervour in Indian politics through the ups and downs in the lives of the Trotters and their activities. The Trotters open branches of Congress in Nakhlau and organizes protest marches, meetings and writes memorandum. But their efforts are ignored not only by the British but also by many Congress leaders. Sealy duly records the service of the Anglo-Indian people to the War effort, albeit with exaggeration and satire:

> A Trotter accounted for the first zeppelin brought down in England while another brought down the first zeppelin over France; fatal balloons, one way or the other, seemed to run in the Trotter blood...Eight out of ten Anglo-Indian men of fighting age left their wives and sweethearts and marched with jerky steps... (TTN 431).

These literary re-writings of historical events and personalities with various literary modes of representation involves both a re-visioning of the original events and a comment on the tradition of remembrance itself.

Sealy in The Trotter-Nama also vehemently contests the idea of objectivity of history, and affirms that historiography is always full of ideological and political affiliations. Sealy, in the context of the betrayal of the Anglo-Indian community by both historians and the people

in power, displays a strong suspicion of history and historians alike. It is Sealy's suspicion of history that makes him debunk the character of Mr. Montagu, the historian in the novel. He portrays him in a negative light by suggesting him to be a "reprobate" and calling him a "Posturing Satan (TTN 369), a "Carpet bagging rogue" and a "devil" (TTN 374). He is denounced both as a political and a moral corrupt. He is also castigated from the Trotter family (Trotter symbolically refers to all Anglo-Indians) by being called, the "Anti-Trotter" (TTN 376). History-writing in the novel is the province of the Anglo-Indian Montagu, whose narrative is "the best an historian could do", but consequently leaves out not only the fantastic events with which the novel is concerned but also much of what makes up everyday life: "The bequest of a school occupied him for an entire chapter, while of breakfasts and recipes he made no mention". Sealy implies that historiography as a genre is complicit with the colonising tendencies, and excludes diversity of perspectives, and speaks only the privileged language of truth. Hayden White says that political partisanship and moral prejudice often lead the historian to misread historical documents and archives and to distort historical truths. He explains the role of political ideologies and bias in the construction of historical events.[38] Theobald Horatius Montagu, a Gandhian follower and the voice of the dominant majority, commits the same folly in the text. In a humorous description Sealy reveals the irony of Montagu's quest as he jumbles up facts and evidence in his bid to construct a story out of a mock ruin (TTN 377).

Shauna Singh Baldwin's What the Body Remembers is another text that deals with cultural memory to depict the lesser-told story of women, especially Sikh women victimized by the horrific events of the Partition. In What the Body Remembers, Baldwin undermines revisionist histories that underplay the horrors of 1947, and she goes on to narrativize this holocaust through an act of memorializing. She achieves this in her representation of the physical suffering of her female characters and of the transference of recollections between generations. Through Roop's enquiries, Baldwin reinscribes a fuller account of what happened to many women in 1947. The story of What the Body Remembersis what Roop remembers, is meant to remember, is expected to remember, and in some ways what she "re-members" at the end of the novel by remembering Kusum and maturing into a stronger, less ornamental woman. Remembering Kusum and all the women like her who were sacrificed during Partition would make history more whole.

Baldwin is keen to ensure that women's experiences are remembered and, is fascinated by the ways in which memories are passed from generation to generation. Using the device of interpreting collective history through the mirror of family relations, Baldwin threads together private memory with collective myth, the fate of a nation and the small world of its inhabitants. We will be discussing this text in greater detail in a later section of this chapter.

Mieke Bal explains, the significance of cultural memory in the following words:

> Cultural memory signifies that memory can be understood as acultural phenomenon as well as an individual or social one...We invoke the discourse ofcultural memory to mediate or modify difficultor tabooed moments of the past—moments that nonetheless impinge, sometimes fatally, on the present.[39]

All the novels under the present study deal with traumatic history. They narrativize the devastations caused by history upon individuals and communities. In doing so they bear testimony to the sufferings of human beings left untold by conventional historiography.

A much later novel dealing with partition, and one that has, like Ghosh's The Shadow Lines has utilized the tool of memory to tell the less-told story of India's eastern part, is Siddhartha Deb's The Point of Return. The Point of Return is a nuanced study of the historical context of the fractured relationship between tribals and non-tribals, the reconfigurations of post-colonial spaces in India's Northeast, and the resultant violence, uprootedness, alienation, and the continued memory of injustice and loss. This partly autobiographical novel of memory depicts the rarely told history of ethnic violence in the Northeast region, and also the unhomely condition of the Bengali immigrants displaced by the Partition. The setting is an unnamed hill-town, presumably Shillong where Deb grew up. We see the tribulations of Dr. Dam whose struggle to implement much-needed reforms in the civil services are thwarted by corruption, venality and ethnic hostilities. The Dam family came to the hill-town in undivided Assam when force out of what was to become East Pakistan after Partition, and was later to become Bangladesh. But Dr. Dam and other displace East Bengalis cannot find a place within the map of India.

The story is narrated by Dam's son Babu who has had a strained relationship with his father and lived for years without knowing him or the turmoil and trauma that his parents had to go through. Their relationship and its gradual coming to terms are shaped by ties of violence. The novel is in reverse chronological order and begins in the 1980s when as a grown up man, Babu returns to the hill-town and begins a journey, an odyssey through his memories in an effort to shape his own identity and find his *home* in a nation haunted by cartographic and ethnic complexities. The reverse chronology is an approximation of the nature of memory, and this chronology displaces the teleological linear historical narration in an attempt to excavate the forgotten and suppressed story of a people who have forever remained excluded from the mainstream history of the nation and are exiles in their own country. Deb's novel is about memory and migration. As an archaeologist excavating memories Babu's memorialization also deals with notions of exile, belonging, home and the crossing of boundaries:

> Perhaps this is the true return, the completion of a cycle set in motion long ago, and if it seems lonely, maybe it is because migration is a reductive evolutionary principle where the sprawling, oppressive family gives way to its streamlined nuclear descendant, to be replaced finally by the individual straining at the limits of memory.[40]

The act of remembering, the urge to recall and revisit whatever is lost and revisit whatever is lost or scattered is insistent throughout the novel. Memory is Babu's only aid in his attempt to make sense of the past, the violence, loss, fracture, and trauma, and also his father's quiet but extraordinary life. Babu grapples with chaotic and incomplete memories as he tries to reconstruct the past in his backward journey into time:

> I assemble maps, photographs and words, call on memory to furnish details that will impart some sense where I lived, something beyond a dim comprehension of remote beauty and even more remote violence. (TPOR 160)

Babu, in his strong reliance on memory's power of reconstructing the past and making sense out of chaos and randomness, resembles Amitav Ghosh's unnamed narrator in The Shadow Lines. The desire for a coherent and unified historical totality, for a reading of the movement from past to present as a continuous line of development is, at best, an ideological fantasy. The silences of the past, although erased, forgotten, or unspeakable, are constitutive of history's self-present totality. These absences at the heart of presence are the hidden ground upon which History builds its claims of objectivity and truth. In Deb's novel, we have the story of a people displaced by currents of history and rejected by their adopted homeland as foreigners. The unstable narrative voice of Babu, like Ghosh's narrator or like Saleem, underscores the significance and effectiveness of memory in displacing the hegemony of monologic official history. His narrative also makes clear the difficulties we have in accessing our past, with our memories invariably a curious mix of subjective and objective viewpoints, formed from within and without, and memory being so often overlapped with the act of forgetting:

> Memory is also about what you decide to remember, so that you can make sense of what has been irrevocably lost. That was the only way the past could be recovered, in the writing of stories in different voices, sometimes across the distances of the third person, sometimes through the eyes of the boy who lived here. Change a name there, add a street, put in the rain, as if by doing this there was something that could be reached, a way for the waste to be negated...it is not that the stories are lies, any more so than this final section. Each group has its own truth, but there is no way of putting them together to form a complete picture. (TPOR 191-92)

What is clear from the above discussion is that these novelists, making use of fragmentary accounts of memory create narratives that put forth an alternative historical paradigm, and this paradigm starkly contests and resists Hegelian formulations of the relationship between past and present. Conventional ideas of history, under the heavy and continuing influence of Hegel, still believes it to be a linear movement, through erasure, toward an already predetermined meaning. But against this totalized notion of history,

postcolonial writers like Ghosh, Rushdie, Sealy and Deb attempts to chart out another road of accessing the past. The events and voices lurking on the margins of historical discourse function as specters in the historical text and cultural unconscious. To create narratives, like Rushdie, Ghosh, Sealy and Deb, according to the dynamics of memory, is to resist the linear, causal relationship of events. A narrative of memory contests the conviction that the past can be pinned down and acknowledges the ambiguity of the past.

II.

While memorializing history, individually or collectively, is one way of re-imagining the past and to subvert the claim of certainty of official, dominant discourse, another common and powerful means is the mythico-allegorical paradigm which is commonly used by these writers. In the west, as Peter Heehs argues, "myth and history are often considered antithetical modes of explanation...Since the Greeks, logos (word as demonstrable truth) has been opposed to mythos (word as authoritative pronouncement)...The general trend of post-Enlightenment historiography has been the eradication of myths from the record of "what really happened"."[41] Ashish Nandy speaks of people who has remained outside "history", that is, people who "live with a past different from that constructed by historians and historical consciousness" and "even have a different way of arriving at that past".[42]

These so called "ahistorical" people and cultures have lived with open-ended concepts of the past or depended on myths, legends, and epics to define their cultural selves. But the dominance of Western idea of rational, objective history, with its scientific principle and in tandem with nineteenth century theories of progress, modernity, and the importance of the nation-state, has written this other view of history of the "ahistorical" cultures out of reckoning as mere ignorance and downright uncivilized. Nandy cogently argues:

> This dominance has also been strengthened by the absence of any radical critique of the idea of history within the modern world and for that matter, within the discipline of history itself.[43]

In India, there is an old cultural tradition that does not distinguish between history and mythology but blends them together. Partha Chatterjee points out that as late as in the early nineteenth century Bengali histories "Myth, history, and the contemporary—all become part of the same chronological sequence; one is not distinguished from another; the passage from one to another, consequently, is entirely unproblematical".[44] Myth was also an integral part of 20th century Gandhian view, and the tradition of myth remained very much alive, in oral tradition as well as in some Indian literature.

History, memory and myth are thus intertwined in various ways, and the problematization of the links is a fruitful contribution to postcolonial studies. Today, there is a growing urgency about rediscovering the "repressed historical self"[45] of the ahistorical societies, not only by the historians but also in the works of postcolonial fiction. We find mythopoeia, epic and mythic interpretations of history and employment of oral traditions, legends and mythological ideas in Tharoor's The Great Indian Novel and Vikram Chandra's Red Earth and Pouring Rain. The revisionist historiography in these texts with their blend of Indian mythology and history lends these novels formidable counter-discursive character. They offer their own versions and understanding of Indian history, and problematize historical discourse and knowledge through such mythic, allegorical and oral design. Crucial to this conception of *itihasa* or mythic history is that it powerfully brings in an ethical dimension through myths to our understanding of the present without separating the present from the remembered past.

Shashi Tharoor's The Great Indian Novelretells the postcolonial history of India in an allegorical format in which the story of the great Indian epic Mahabharata provides the basic structure of narrative. Bill Ashcroft points out that this subversive interpolation of the story of the Mahabharata upon the story of Indian history, "not only provides a reconceptualization of events in the context of a dense mythology but also serves to disrupt the discourse of history itself, projecting it into the future. We can think of it as the overlaying of an allegorical cultural map upon the narrative of official history to effectively 'reshape' it".[46] Tharoor has himself made some revealing comments on his project of revisioning history. He says: "I am a student of history and I am...concerned with the recording of history... My work is...conscious about the various ways that history can be told and recorded".[47]

On another occasion Tharoor states that the novel is "an attempt to retell the political history of 20th century India through a fictional recasting of events, episodes and characters from the Mahabharata.[48] Tharoor's adoption of the epic for retelling the story of modern day India was most appropriate. The Mahabharata is regarded as not only having deep historical value, but it also has a perennial contemporaneity, which has accounted for its popularity and relevance in every age. Rustom Barucha points out: "The Mahabharata is not merely a great narrative poem; it is our *itihasa*, the fundamental source of knowledge for our literature, dance, painting, sculpture, theology, statecraft, sociology, ecology—in short, our *history* in all its detail and density".[49] The Mahabharata does not have a fixed text, and it has gone through numerous retellings and revisions in different Indian languages. The flexibility of the epic model makes it suitable for any reconstruction of history.

In an interview he made his statement of purpose very clearly:

> [The Mahabharata] struck me as a work of such contemporary resonance, it helped crystallize my own inchoate ideas about issues. I wanted a vehicle to transmit some of my political and historical interests in the evolution of modern India. I saw the recasting of the Mahabharata as a perfect vehicle for the two Indias.[50]

Tharoor's fascinating combination of history, mythology, and politics thus remains close to an indigenous living tradition.While the Western civilizing mission made the colonized absorb its values, as well as views of history, Tharoor makes the Western reader see things and read history from an essential Indian point of view. Bill Ashcroft elaborates on this process of reversal in the following lines:

> The Great Indian Novel demonstrates not only the process of the postcolonial interpolation of history but the kind of 'resistance' which can be achieved by an interpolation of the category 'literature' itself. What we find is not a simple reversal of history; at one level the narrative of history is left untouched. But the layering of the transparency of Indian cosmology, values, assumptions,

world view upon that history via theMahabharata enacts the civilizing mission *in reverse*".[51]

Tharoor's "restructuration" of pre and post-Independence Indian history according to the mythological framework of the Mahabharata, is a counter-hegemonic strategy where he adapts a compelling and popular Indian epic so that he may "negate the prior European negation of [his] culture and adopt and creative(ly) modif(y)...western languages and artistic forms in conjunction with indigenous languages and forms".[52]

But perhaps the most significant manner in which Tharoor parts company with traditional histories of India is his recognition of the difficulty of translating past events into an "objective" narrative. As opposed to the traditional/Western and Positivist historiography, and of fictive historical realism, Tharoor's novel questions the very objectivity of historical writing, by foregrounding the act of recording and narrativizing history. This is done through the ponderings of the main narrator V.V., whose open admission of the purely subjective nature of his account implies that all accounts of history are subjective, that "...there are only truths in the plural, and never one truth; and there is rarely falseness *per se*, just other truths".[50] This is what V. V. means when he says:

> It is my truth, Ganapathi, just as the crusade to drive out the British reflected Gangaji's truth, and the fight to be rid of both the British and the Hindu was Karna's truth. Which philosopher would dare to establish a hierarchy among such varieties? Question, Ganapathi. Is it permissible to modify truth with a possessive pronoun? Question Two and Three. How much may one select, interpret and arrange facts of the living past before truth is jeopardized by inaccuracy? (TGIN 164)

By extension, Tharoor underlines the impossibility of any totalizing, absolute or conclusive account of Indian history. Like Rushdie before him, Tharoor believes that to understand the history of India, we have to read through numerous fragments and millions of stories, each narrated in different ways.

Tharoor/ Vyas implies that there is no such thing as a true, objective account of any period of history; all one has are biases and distortions:

> Every tale I have told you, every perception I have conveyed, there are a hundred equally valid alternatives I have omitted and of which you are unaware. I make no apologies for this. This is my story of the India I know, with its biases, selections, omissions, distortions, all mine. But you cannot derive your cosmogony from a single birth, Ganapathi. Every Indian must for ever carry with him, in his own head and heart, his own history of India. (TGIN373)

The historiographic position of V.V. is similar to the ideas of scholars like Hayden White in that he also emphasizes the role of rhetoric in historical narratives. V. V. understands that all historical accounts are selective and fragmentary because the historians build up a particular account out of an infinite number of stories. Any attempt to describe historical events always includes ordering and arranging certain narrative strategies, which then aid in fulfilling the historian's intentions.

> There is no such thing as a single correct view of any object under study but...many correct views, each requiting its own style of representation...The historian operating under such a conception could thus be one who, like the modern artist and scientist, seeks to exploit a certain perspective on the world that does not pretend to exhaust description or analysis.[53]

Like Rushdie/Saleem in Midnight's Children, Tharoor the novelist/historian is creatively reinterpreting and re-presenting"popular" stories and selected moments of the past and ordering history like a historian, gives shape to the unknown. V. V. calls himself a "chronicler and a participant in the events I describe" (TGIN 163). He knows that his account is partial and selective, but he insists on its truth-value. White states, "...the historian must draw upon a fund of culturally provided *mythoi* in order to constitute the facts as figuring a

story of a particular kind, just as he must appeal to the same fund of *mythoi* in the minds of his readers to endow his account of the past with the odor of meaning or significance".[54] Tharoor's narrator/historian is conscious about artificial methods of recounting history—a history which is always imposed and ordered:

> We tend, Ganapati, to look back on history as if it were a stage play, with scene building upon scene, our hero moving from one action to the next in his remorseless stride to the climax. Yet life is never like that. If life were a play the noise offstage, and for that matter the sounds of the audience, would drown out the lines of the principal actors. That, of course, would make for a rather poor tale; and so the recounting of history is only the order we artificially impose upon life to permit its lessons to be more clearly understood (TGIN101).

Tharoor/Vyas is striking at the very notion of the "sequential and teleological progress of the civilizing mission" of imperialism and of imperial history as "a theatre played out on the passive stage called "India"."[55] In The Great Indian Novel, Tharoor approaches history from a different angle vis-a-vis Indian historiography or realist fiction, drawing upon Indian myths, epic and Puranic frameworks.

Regarding Rushdie's mythopoeia, the words of Syed Amanuddin are noteworthy:

> Rushdie's interest in the socio-political aspects of these regions and cultures, however, is primarily in terms of mythology and allegory. He attempts to combine facts of history, biography, and autobiography with the frontiers of fantasy.[56]

In Midnight's Children, we find that Saleem is trying to write "a new myth of freedom" against the oppressive and lying myths created by the powerful ruling class and the state apparatus. Amanuddin says, "Midnight's Children mythologizes the very consciousness of independent India with its memories of the past, dreams of the future, and harsh realities of the present".[57] Saleem Sinai is a mythical figure who embodies the mythology of free India.

Saleem's story mythologizes a newly independent nation with its history of socio-political struggles, thwarted secularism, unselfish and selfish leaders, class struggles, cultural and linguistic divisions, border wars, and excesses of "the Widow" during her Emergency reign.

Myth in Midnight's Children is not overt as a guiding or organising principle. Its presence in the novel is subtle, with the various narrative lines and units woven together through metonym and gesture by links forged through mythological reference and association. Through this narrative method Rushdie locates an alternative to the narrative of the state, an alternative already within the society but needing to be activated. Myth in Rushdie and Tharoor offer a counter to the monologic form of history and encodes dissent located in the novels that are produced in the context of entrenched power formations. Historical context then makes myth an appropriate form at specific times. This mythic strategy is most evident in Tharoor and Rushdie's scathing attack of Indira Gandhi and her reign of terror during the Emergency.

In the novel, the Widow (i. e. Indira Gandhi) is presented in all her monstrosity. She first appears in a terrifyingdream that Saleem has during a bout with fever. Her description in this section resembles the goddess Kali who represents death and destruction. Saleem describes her ashaving green and black hair; her "arm is long as death its skin isgreen the fingernails are long and sharp and black"; and the "children torn in two in Widow hands which rolling rolling halvesof children roll them into little balls" (MC249).

Saleem says that the Widow Rushdie, through his narrator Saleem, clearly indicates howthe Widow, "was not only Prime Ministerof India but also aspired to be Devi, the Mother goddess inher most terrible aspect, possessor of the shakti of the gods" (MC 522). By seeking possession of the shakti, or spiritual power ofthe Divine Mother, the Widow enacts a monumentalist strategy through which she constructs what Nietzsche describes as a deceptive analogy that uses "seductive similarities" to inspire "foolhardiness" and "fanaticism" (MC 71). Saleem's characterization might at first seem extreme; surely Indira Gandhi did not conceiveof herself literally as a mother goddess. But what Saleem tries to point out is that her swift andcruel actions during the Emergency were perceived to be analogouswith the actions of Devi, and this was a role that Indira Gandhi did not repudiate. Being Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter Indira embodies the glory ofpast leadership. During the Emergency, she was deified by many politicians, intellectuals and common people alike. In a country like India with the

long and deeply rooted traditions of iconography, this conflation of self-image of Indira Gandhi with mythical figures (also because of the tremendous power that she wielded) led millions of Indians to link her with the figure of the Mother goddess. Her dictatorial excesses, cruelty, and wanton destruction of democratic institutions reinforced the notion that the repetitive cycle of destruction and regeneration that obtains in Hindu teaching can also be used to explain modern political processes.

The concept of the cycle of destruction and regeneration is further utilized by Rushdie to explain the contemporary scenario. In the novel we see that Kali and Parvati, two names for the same goddess, are engaged in two distinct activities. Kali the Widow drains the Children of Midnight of their hope, whereas Parvati gives birth to the next generation. Thus the cycle of destruction and regeneration, preserved in the monumental traditions ofthe past, continues in the present when those same traditions are called upon to justify contemporary actions. Saleem refers to this cyclic view of history when he writes:

> I remain, today, half-convinced that in that time of accelerated eventsand diseased hours the past of India rose up to confound her present; the new-born, secular state was being given an awesome reminder ofits fabulous antiquity, in which democracy and votes for women were irrelevant...so that people were seized with atavistic longings, and forgetting the new myth of freedom reverted to their old ways, their old regionalist loyalties and prejudices (MC 294).

While the Widow vehemently imposes the tradition of cyclical monumentalism as a bulwark against political opponents andto construct an "official" version based on "facts" about the Emergency, Saleem is determined to write his own version, a counternarrative, which he hopes will express the "new myth of freedom". In this oppositional role Saleem practises the critical mode of history. One past that he seeks to break up and dissolve is the mythico-religious past preserved in Hindu tradition. At one point, he writes:

> Think of this: history, in my version, entered a new phase on August 15th, 1947— but in another version, that inescapable date is no more than one

> fleeting instant in the Age of Darkness, Kali-Yuga, in which the cow of mortality has been reduced to standing, teeteringly, on a single leg! (MC 233)

Thus, Saleem's critical weapon must be turned against both a religious traditionalism that posits a repeated pattern of destruction and regeneration as well as a modern form of governmental manipulation of the cultural and political semiotic that produces objective "truth".

Midnight's Children ends with the recognition that Saleem is at the end of a line. Nehru's promise has been drained of all possibility for him personally and perhaps even India itself has come to the end of that particular road in its history. Saleem recognizes that the country will have to fashion new ideals to inspire its people and move forward, but that will have to be the task of a new generation: "New myths are needed," he acknowledges, "but that's none of my business" (MC 48). Christie Daniels has discussed how Rushdie debunks the six conventional myths of nation as outlined by Anthony Smith.[58] A later writer who grew up under the shadow of Rushdie, Vikram Chandra in his Red Earth and Pouring Rain has tried to do just that.

There is a constant interface between elite and folk cultures in Chandra and he sees himself as a modern storyteller in the age-old Indian tradition. The influence of the non-linear narrative of the Sanskrit epics and the storyteller figure and the presence of the great Indian epics is obvious in his narratives. Chandra said in an interview of 1998 with the Italian critic Silvia Albertazzi:

> As I wrote it, Red Earth and Pouring Rain seemed a novel quite remarkably out of fashion. I mean, its form comes from the stories of the Mahabharata and theRamayanawhich my mother and aunts used to tell me when I was small. This type of spiralling narrative, with its juxtapositions and unexpected meetings, is an ancient Indian form".[59]

Chandra draws on the literary traditions and techniques of epics, myths and oral story-telling prevalent in India throughout history and combines these with a style and methodology all his own. What results is a product that is at once perceptibly Indian in its feel, familiarly Indian in its style, and at the same time, embodies its own form. The non-linear narrative strategy gives

rise to a novel that, in its entirety, is something like a "sea of stories," reminiscent the Pancha Tantra, a book of classical Indian stories, the well-known Arabian Nights, or the Kathasaritsagara (Ocean of the Streams of Story). In both of his published books there is a storyteller who tells stories to an audience, and also an audience that talks back. Red Earth and Pouring Rain offers the reader a Chinese-box structure of stories within stories, framed within the non-naturalistic circumstance of the displaced poet Sanjay, reincarnated as a talking and writing white monkey telling tales of nineteenth-century India. Love and Longing in Bombay is structured as a sequence of stories narrated in a city bar, the "Fisherman's Rest", to an audience of regulars by a retired civil servant named Subramaniam. In both books, a crucial keyword is "Listen", and, indeed, the storytelling motif is written into the fabric of Chandra's texts.

Tell a story", declares the man-monkey Sanjay at the very end of Red Earth and Pouring Rain (REPN616); and, indeed, the whole novel consists of a series of interlinked and interlocking stories stretching across continents and centuries. On the very last page of Red Earth and Pouring Rain, Abhay declares that the story-telling cannot and must not stop, it must begin again:

> I will tell you a story that will grow like a lotus vine, that will twist in on itself and expand ceaselessly, till all of you are a part of it, and the gods come to listen, till we are all talking in a musical hubbub that contains the past, every moment of the present, and all the future (REPN 617).

The narratives propel the reader backwards and forwards between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (India and England) and the contemporary world (India and the US). Fiction intermingles with history and myth: the narrative incorporates divine personages from the Hindu pantheon and actual historical figures and events.Gods play pivotal roles in the novel, particularly Hanuman.

The story of Red Earth and Pouring Rain revolves around the fate of Sanjay, reincarnated as a monkey that Abhay shoots for stealing his new jeans from the washing line. When Yama, god of death, enters the story to claim the dying monkey, Ganesh intervenes with a deal. If Sanjay can tell his story and keep everyone entertained, he will be saved. What follows is a reworking of history and myth. His story begins in the period when mercenaries

and princes, along with the East India Company, were fighting over the remains of the Mughal Empire. Chandra's fictional characters mix not only with gods but also historical figures like Benoît de Boigne (1751-1830), from what is now the French territory of Savoie, the German Walter Reinhardt (1720-1778) and the Irishman George Thomas (1756-1802).

One of the main characters, Sikander, is based directly on a historical figure from the nineteenth century. Chandra explains to Albertazzi: "At Columbia University in New York, in the library, I found a translation of the autobiography of Colonel [Sikander] Skinner, which was what made me write Red Earth and Pouring Rain.[60] More specifically the novel chronicles aspects of Indian history from about 1750 through 1900, the time period during which the British Raj rose and eventually conquered India, transforming what Indians had believed were missionaries and businessmen into colonizers. Key related events that are re-told here include the fall of the Mughal Empire and the mutiny of 1857. In these segments, Sanjay tells the stories of his past lives, and in so doing, reveals tales of actual warriors and princesses and of fantastic events. In these fictional re-tellings, readers meet with stories of bravery, romance and miracles, as well as the story of the colonization of South Asia by the Raj.

The narrative leaps to late 20th century as Sanjay makes way for the youthful Abhay who recounts his experiences in America, where he has attended college. Abhay's story is about the clash of cultures and the psychological and social dislocation that results from migration. These accounts are not historical in content, but they are heavily symbolic, containing a representational interplay with Sanjay's historical narratives. For example, the British Raj materializes in a contemporary Americanized form, re-appearing in Abhay's narratives as the father of Abhay's American girlfriend, Amanda. Abhay's role as a story teller and his story fulfils significant purposes. Mee points out that the insertion of Abhay's story of cultural clashes of the 20th century along with the epic history of India's past saves Chandra from simply producing

> ...an exoticised spectacle of otherness for a Western readership. Abhay, the foreign-returned student, has to step into the gap created when Sanjay is too exhausted to continue by telling a tale of his scholarship days in America, 'the crucible in which the world's most weightless and alluring myths are

perfected'. The crowd that gathers to listen remains as fascinated by this tale drawn from an entirely different mythology, a road movie which takes them across desert skies and into the big city of Houston, as by Sanjay's story of fantastic deeds from India's past".[61]

Red Earth and Pouring Rain is a novel that presents the story of nomadic lives and hybrid selves and identity. It is a novel that is built upon tropes like travelling, exploration, and performance. To represent a "hybrid, traveling version of Indianness"[62] Chandra uses a similarly hybrid form: he combines the Western novel, centered on a plot outlined by the frame narrative and the traditional Indian storytelling dialogue between an oral storyteller and his audience.

History in the novel becomes "The Big Indian Lie", but Chandra warns that *Itihasa* is no less important or true than the Western mode of narratives which is objective, scientific, and rational. Chandra emphasizes the ancient Indian mode of *Itihasa*, where the mythic, fantastic and the factual can converge. The entire novel is structured around the idea of reincarnation, an idea completely alien to Markline's "scientific principle". What Chandra does do, like Sealy in The Trotter-Nama, is to explicitly differentiate his method from a Western tradition identified in terms of an Aristotelian desire for straight lines and defining essences. Western modernity is in this way reproduced not as the privileged sphere of truth and reason, but as the site of another mythology which is just as enticing as India's own-perspective.

Towards the end of the novel, Abhay decides to return to India for good. This makes it clear that he is not allured by the myth of the West as the sphere of Enlightenment with all its qualities of modernity, progressiveness and rationality. His decision contradicts Markline's belief that the introduction of scientific principles into India will set in train a pattern of historical necessity that leads from Eastern darkness to Western enlightenment. The paradigmatic, resonant and symbolic quality of myths means that they cannot be easily contained and condensed, hence they encode resistance to the hegemonic drives found in the narratives of the colonizer/state. Sanjay ruptures the idea of fixity and rational science in his immortal self. His transmigratory body and self built around the idea of the Hindu

mythological idea of reincarnation resists the colonial or any hegemonic drive for containment.

As such, Chandra's Red Earth and Pouring Rainholds rank as a thoughtful political critique which reasserts the mythical, legendary, epic, open-ended modes of historiographic narration of the so called "ahistorical people". Myth, fantasy and magical narratives necessarily perform an act of dissent in these novels by "displaying an alternative method of societal organisation and narrative construction. This organisation involves the paradigmatic dissenting nature of myth; myth as paradigm cuts across the syntagmatic narrative of the state".[63]

III.

As can be seen from the narrativization of history in these novels, these writers underline the role of imagination and narrative structures in the description of historical reality. History, then, is rewritten or re-imagined not only because of changes at the collective level in every generation, but also because of the realization that it is open to "other" histories voiced by "other" entities with fluid identities. It is at this point that an alliance is forged between history and literature, with particular emphasis on both the literary dimension of a social experience and the social dimension of a literary experience. As Vishnupriya Sengupta points out "Re-presenting the past in fiction or in history denotes opening it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological; both the genres appear to be equally intertextual, deploying the texts of the past within their own complex textuality and suggest that truths exist only in the plural, that there can never be one truth".[64] It is now widely acknowledged that the demarcation between history and fiction gets blurred as both historians and fiction writers show an awareness of their assumptions and repressions, opening the historiographical paradigm of reality and representation to critical insights that transform attitudes to past events. In the context of Indian writing in English, this narrativization of history not only utilizes different paradigms like memory and myth, but also different forms like historiographic metafiction in magic realist form to downright realist

ones. In this section, we are going to look at the formal structures of these texts that narrativize history.

In postcolonial studies, magic realist texts are privileged over traditional texts. It is often emphasized that magic-realist texts are better equipped to resist and contest ideological hegemony by dint of their subversive potentials. In her book, Magical Realism and The Fantastic, Amaryll Chanady explains that magic realism is characterised by two conflicting but autonomously coherent perspectives, one based on an "enlightened" and rational view of reality and the other based on the acceptance of the supernatural as part of the everyday world.[65] Magic realism in literature implies the co-existence of the magic and the real. It is distinguished fron the fantastic narratives in that while a narrator of the fantastic dispenses with the laws of logic and the physical world and recounts an action which may be absurd or supernatural, a narrator of magic realism accepts most or all of the realistic conventions of fiction but introduces "something else," something which is not realistic, into the text. These elements are not highlighted for shock value, but are woven in seamlessly. Despite the presence of fantastic events, however, it is always linked with the "real" world, grounded in recognisable reality through social, historical and political references.

Magic realism has a special significance for postcolonial discursive practices. Magic realism has been described as "writing that works both within and against the aesthetics of realism," and postcolonial writing, it can be suggested, is writing that works both within and against the effects of colonialism.[66] Magic realism contests the restrictions of colonial space by making problematic any notion of a single unified world-view or reality, thereby allowing us to explore and experience other dimensions of reality of which we are not normally aware. According to Stephen Slemon, magic realism's strength is that it encodes "a concept of resistance to the massive imperial centre and its totalizing systems," and further, that the deployment of magic realism in literature can "signify resistance to central assimilation by more stable generic systems".[67] In opposition to straight-forward, rational and controlled order which is the dominant style of imperialism, magic realism mixes fantasy and reality, fact and myth, while resisting classical expectations of closure and unity.

"The formal technique of 'magic realism,' Linda Hutcheon writes "has been singled out by many critics as one of the points of conjunction of post-modernism and post-colonialism". [68] Her tracing the origins of magic realism as a literary style to Latin America

and Third World countries is accompanied by a definition of a post-modern text as signifying a change from "modernism's ahistorical burden of the past"; it is a text that "self-consciously reconstruct[s] its relationship to what came before". She further notes that the post-modern is linked by magic realism to "post-colonial literatures [which] are also negotiating...the same tyrannical weight of colonial history in conjunction with the past".[69]

Among the writers selected for this study, Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Chandra and I. Allan Sealy abundantly use magic-realist and other elements from the tradition of postmodern metafictional texts. Rushdie's Midnight's Childrenis the prime example of a postmodern historiographic metafiction (as defined by Linda Hutcheon) that employs magic-realist elements like fantasy, parody and intertextuality. Rushdie as a novelist refuses to accept the magical/real dichotomy. In an interview with Fernando Galván he point to the fundamental difference between reality in the East from the reality in the West(though he carefully avoids the term "magical realism"or to abstains from elaborating on a magical difference between both realities) and says that "in a society where most people believe in God [...]the miraculous is accepted at the same level as, for instance, the political".[70] In his fictional writing the magical and the everyday coexist on the page as the same kind of event. By so doing he is implicitly taking both kinds of events as naturally coexistent in the discourse he is representing.

Midnight's Children employs the narrative framework consists of a tale in which Saleem Sinai recounts his life-story to his wife-to-be Padma. In this highly self-referential narrative Saleem draws on the indigenous Indian oral narratives, particularly the similarly orally recounted Arabian Nights. The events in Rushdie's text also parallel the magical nature of the narratives recounted in the Arabian Nights. Rushdie's principle use of magic realism in the text involves the telepathic abilities of Saleem and the other thousand and one children born at the stroke of midnight on August 15th 1947 (the date of Indian independence), abilities that enable them to communicate with each other and in Saleem's case, to read the minds of those around him. The midnight children are a magic realist device emphasising the continued struggle to come to terms with identity within the polarities of the post-colonial. They are, by virtue of their midnight birth reflect the essence of the historical time in which they are born. The reality in Midnight's Children makes itself discernible through the heavy lens of the fantastic. Other instances of magical events include, for instance, the attempt to

electrocute Saleem at the latrine (MC 353), or his journey in the "basket of invisibility" (MC 383)).

In Midnight's Children, the narrative comprises and compresses Indian cultural history. "Once upon a time," Saleem muses, "there were Radha and Krisna, and Rama and Sita, and Laila and Majnu; also (because we are not affected by the West) Romeo and Juliet, and Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn" (MC 259). At this point Hutcheon's post-modern perspective can be discerned: characters from Indian cultural history are chronologically intertwined with characters from Western culture, and the devices that they signify—Indian culture, religion and storytelling, Western drama and cinema—are presented in Rushdie's text with post-colonial Indian history to examine both the effect of these indigenous and non-indigenous cultures on the Indian mind and in the light of Indian Independence. Magic realism, thus, helps Rushdie to interweave traditional Indian culture to the contemporary multicultural ethos.

The extraordinary events of modern Indian history are related while at the same time examining the acts of writing, language, of memory, storytelling, and the forging of identity, both personal and national. These issues are foregrounded mostly in the mode of historiographic metaficton. The narrative switches disconcertingly and self-consciously between Saleem's story (then) and its creation (now). The narrative is addressed to Padma who participates as an interlocuteress by asking questions, displaying impatience with Saleem's digressions, encouraging and admonishing him. In response to her constant questionings, Saleem explains and clarifies his art of writing to her, even while writing his account. Thus Rushdie underlines the relationship between the writer and reader of any narrative.[71] He draws attention to its artifice, and destroys the illusion of the "reality" of the novel as it is conventionally understood.

The self-consciousness that we see in Rushdie's invitation to the reader for creative participation is further extended to Saleem Sinai's growing distrust on his own narration. As the novel progresses, Sinai starts to question his narrative, and to warn his reader/hearer about the unreliability of his memory, and of his ultimate uncertainty regarding his place in the scheme of things. He is worried about the fact that he might have distorted the entire history of his time in his desperate need for meaning. Saleem realizes that he has committed many mistakes due to his breakneck speed of writing. Therefore, he pleads for their revision, but to

his frustration, he finds this task of revising too exasperating and time-consuming. Precisely because of this he writes about it with the same mixture of humility and arrogance, as he did with respect to the unreliability of a historian:

> The process of revision should be constant and endless; don't think I am satisfied with what I have done... Sometimes... Saleem appears to have known too little; at other times, too much...yes, I should revise and revise, improve and improve; but there is neither time nor energy. I am obliged to offer no more than this stubborn sentence: it happened that way because that's how it happened. (MC 443)

At one time, he finds out that he had made a mistake about Mahatma Gandhi's death. It meant that if he revised it, he would have to produce an entirely new rendering of things. Instead, he chose not to correct it to emphasize the uniqueness of his historical account: "in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time" (MC 164). This is a metaphoric way of suggesting that the uniqueness of all accounts lies in their novelty of presentation or interpretation. In this regard Rushdie made some significanr remarks by saying that the unreliable narration on the part of Saleem is one way of attempting to read the world that we do in our everyday lives.[72]

Though Saleem is rejecting the idea of the absolute truth and is opposed to the idea of objectivity in historical writing, he is not opposed to meaning. He still believes that some meaning is possible—but he is determined to make meaning on his own terms and he is not prepared to let others dictate truth and meaning for him. He frequently voices anxiety concerning the solipsism of arriving at an understanding of the individual's role in history, especially when that history is unsettlingly permeated by what can only be understood as magic.

There is a general linear trajectory, but events later in the novel appear as throwaway asides in the early part of the novel, coincidences and correspondences are foregrounded, characters appear before their time, and scenes are chopped up and described in parallel. Magic and realism balance each other perfectly throughout. Sinai/Rushdie is as much as theorist of magic realism as a practitioner. A characteristic device is to describe objects as though they were people, and people as though they were objects: Dr Narlikar, the physician

who delivers Saleem Sinai into the world, glows in the dark like a phosphorescent object, while the chutneys his ayah makes are full of the emotions and disappointed hopes of human beings.

The presence of fantasy, self-reflexive narrator and parody are also used by Vikram Chandra, Shashi Tharoor and I. Allan Sealy. Tharoor's narrator in The Great Indian Novel, Ved Vyas and Sealy's narrator in The Trotter-Nama are highly self-reflexive ones who involves the reader/listener in their acts of narration and questions and scrutinizes their own narration. In Vikram Chandra's Red Earth and Pouring Rain, there is a blending of fantasy and the real as characters from Indian mythology and real people of present time interact with each other.

In the post-modern literary tradition, an absence of universal truth replaces prior notions of one absolute truth, in terms of history as well as such notions as identity and society. Just as postmodernism dismantles the concept of absolute truth, Linda Hutcheon's concept of the"narcissistic narrative" exemplifies the postmodern undermining of prior traditions: "The originsof the self-reflecting structure that governs many modern novels might well lie in that parodic intent basic to the genre as it began in Don Quijote, an intent to unmask dead conventions bychallenging, by mirroring".[73] Narcissistic narrative exhibits a narratorial awareness thatinvites the reader to participate in stripping prior conventions and traditions. Hutcheon argues that "What narcissistic narrative does do in flaunting, in baring its fictional and linguistic systems to the reader's view, is to transform the process of making, of *poiesis*, into part of theshared pleasure of reading. [...] it is the human imaginative *process* that is explicitly called intoaction, in both the author and the reader".[74] Those novels that exhibit characteristics of narcissistic narrative emphasize the creative process and do so with an awareness of that process, breaking down old conventions and proposing replacements for those conventions. Novels like Midnight's Children, The Great Indian Novel, and The Trotter-Nama clearly belong to this kind of writing.

Rushdie, Tharoor, Sealy and Chandra are lauded by Western critics for their historiographic metafictional writings. It is argued that postmodern techniques are best equipped to disrupt and contest the "master narrative" of history. According to Hutcheon, "traditional narrative models—both historiographical and fictional—that are based on European models of continuous chronology and cause-and-effect relations are utterly

inadequate to the task of narrating the history of the New World".[75] And this enables the novelists to present the necessarily fragmentary and fragmented histories of India in their novels. This representation saves the danger of shallow homogenization of history. As Hutcheon emphasizes, postmodernism has problematised history and raised issues such as those of narrative form, of intertextuality, of strategies of representation, of the role of language, of the relation between historical fact and experiential event, and, in general, of the epistemological and ontological consequences of the act of rendering problematic what was once taken for granted by historiography and literature.[76]

The art of Sealy's fabulation lies in his utilization of the traditional *nama* form in place of traditional historiographic style. Sealy seems to suggests that it is only through such a highly embellished, picaresque, fabulative, intertextual, constantly digressive form of history as opposed to official rigid historiography that the "invisible" body of the Anglo-Indians can be made visible and re-written into the national imaginary. The appropriation of the traditional "*Nama*" form is definitely part of Sealy's attempt to unseat historiography and to displace the genres of the colonized with those of the colonized.

Sealy's appropriation of the old Indianized form of the "nama" is an attempt to unseat historiography and to displace the genres of the coloniser with those of the colonised. To unravel the irony and distortions and political complicity of Montagu's historiographic agenda, Sealy appoints Eugene (the seventh Trotter) as the official chronicler of the Anglo-Indian story who "does not speak the privileged language of truth. What he says is continually interrogated, interrupted and undermined in ways that could be thought of as an attempt to write a kind of newly postcolonial history".[77] Eugene's chronicle is free from the constraints and colonizing tendencies that European historiography is guilty of as embodied by Montagu. The inclusive narrative method of the "*nama*" or the chronicle form offers to the reader history novelised in the sense that it is open to the diversity of perspectives and languages circulating in the world. The following passage in which Eugene contrasts his method with that of "history" proper, display Sealy's debunking of the kind of historiography of the powerful which have put the Anglo-Indians only a minor and marginalized status in national history:

...Who first brought care to Sans Souci?

The Devil did.

His principal name?

The ANTI-TROTTER

His other names?

Theobald Horatius Montagu.

What was the state of Sans Souci before he came?

A state of bliss.

And after?

A state of desolation.

………………………………

The foul substance is called what?

The foul substance is called History.

And its opposite?

Is the Chronicle.

Which may be illustrated?

Profusely.

Is colourful?

In the extreme… (TTN375-376).

There are three categories of historical representations noted by Hayden White in TheContent of the Form: the annals (comprising of the date and the event); the chronicle (consisting of a sketchy narrative form); and the narrative history (which analyses historical events from all aspects).[78] Sealy prefers the chronicle form for his narration as it is free from the suspicions of history. He also reprieves himself in apprehension from the accusation which might question his historical narrative by confessing that, "…the chronicle (not history) of the Trotters [is] set out by the seventh Trotter" (TTN 7).

One of the most important elements of postmodern fiction employed by Sealy in this novel is intertextuality. In his attempt to recover the history of the Anglo-Indians, Sealy reverts to history by way of re-visiting or re-writing canonical texts. According to Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, "'remembering the past' is also a matter of recollecting earlier texts and rewriting earlier stories".[79] They point out the ways in which "cultural memory" and literature

interact with each other. They say that "literature establishes a 'memory of its own' in the form of intertextual relations that give new cultural life to old texts. A significant part of literary production consists of the rewriting of canonical texts and, more generally, of earlier cultural narratives such as folk tales and myths".[80] In Sealy's novel we see exactly such a mode of remembrance in his critical contestation with canonical/imperial texts and writers like Kipling and his novel Kim and other colonial narratives which showed an utter contempt for this hybrid community called the Anglo-Indians. Resistance to colonial insult is achieved by Sealy in his huge subversion of Kipling's Raj novel Kim. Kipling's Kim contemptuously dismisses the hybrid community of the Anglo-Indians by refusing to follow through on their pedigree. In the novel, Kipling dismisses these half-Europeans as low-caste and says that one should not waste time and energy in following their pedigree. On the contrary, Sealy, with a dazzlingly subversive and subalternist move sets out to recuperate the maligned and forgotten history of the community by following through on their pedigree:

> "A strange monadic people," Peter Jonquil went on.
> "Nomadic?"
> "Monadic. They live in a kind of bubble—or many bubbles. They speak a kind of English..... They fantasize about the past. They improvise grand pedigrees. It's like a Raj novel gone wrong... (TTN560).

The Raj novel referred to by Sealy is Kim by Rudyard Kipling.

The Trotter-Nama is a huge subversion of the colonial text Kim by Rudyard Kipling. Kim, the protagonist of Kipling's novel becomes Mik (short for Michael, General Mik Trotter) in Sealy's hands. Kim has a strong aversion for military life, drilling and routine of regimentation: "I will not be a soldier!" Kim states with determination. But in The Trotter-Nama, his alter-ego Mik is not only turned into a soldier by Sealy, but one who is passionate about war, and achieves the status of a legendary soldier. Sealy maintains a regular and particular conversation with Kipling throughout The Trotter-Nama. Sealy's achievement is his ability to encompass all this and more as the inevitabilities of history, the intractable dimensions of life:

> I wish to shew how History is made. Understand first, good adept, that there are no sides to it. Front and back there be, certainly, which the vulgar call past and future (the one with buttons and the other not), and also top and bottom, which some call class (the one with epaulettes, the other not). But sides, no. No circumventing it, sharp adept: the fabric extends endlessly, defying the lateral cut (TTN 343).

Mukul Kesavan's novel Looking Through Glass is a fascinating novel as it lies in the interstices of magical-realism and realism. Kesavan's novel denounces Rankean objectivity of history by taking recourse to the counterfactual mode of writing in delineating an important period of Indian history—the last few years of Freedom Movement leading up to the Partition and independence. While academic historiography still swear by the ideas of scientific objectivity as propounded by the German historian and thinker Ranke, Kesavan reveals that the volatile history of Indian Freedom Movement, the promise of a utopian nation, and the failure of the nationalist vision can be better depicted by asking a question like "what if", and by going backwards to find the answer and see what India would and could have been if "this" had happened or "that" had or had not happened.

Mukul Kesavan's Looking Through Glass questions the hegemonic aspects and reliability of official history, and examines "the various other versions and elements of human agency that have been left out of official accounts" of the struggle for independence.[81] The textuality of history is exposed by Kesavan by various means in the novel. His novel is a skilful blend of the realism and magical-realism and it challenges traditional ways of historiography. Kesavan abandons the objectivity of history and offers a concoction of anticipation and retrospection of a troubled period of Indian history and this concocted version counters the given or forced version of history. The past is seen through the eyes of the protagonist who has arrived at the past and this past has become his immediate present. Throughout the narrative he keeps comparing his immediate present with his actual present time. Thus historical events as he learn from textbooks are constantly being revised by his experiences during his exile to the past.

In its partial reliance on the techniques of historiographic metaficton, Looking Through Glass makes use of divergent narratives which are treated simultaneously by the narrator as he, unwillingly and helplessly, lives through history with his acquired knowledge of past and anticipated future. He is deeply immersed in the vortex of history of the past and witnesses historical events like the 1942 rebellion, the arrival of Wavell as the Viceroy of India, and the Partition and its effects in Delhi. But, unlike Saleem in Midnight's Children Kesavan's protagonist does not play direct instrumental role in the historical events. He remains, for most of the time, a passive witness, not self-reflexive, and he hopes to emerge out of the time-warp, to "return to the present unchanged by its past"[82] (LTG 15). He also believes that "in gigantic surge of history, the tiny splash I made would pass unnoticed" (LTG 16). He observes with detachment, "Not everything that happened in the past was history" (LTG 16).

The last line points to the fact that the history which historians would offer for us is created out of a process of selection and manipulation. Historians decide which events would go in to the making of a particular version of history. Kesavan is himself a historian by profession and he is very much aware of the ideological and philosophical issues involving the act of writing history. The narrator in the novel accumulates different versions of history through the people around him; first through Dadi and then through Haasan, Ammi, Chaubey, Parwana and Masroor in turns. Pramod Nayar says, "This shadowy assimilation becomes a method to prevent concretizing any knowledge of the past".[83] The multivocal narrative dismantles the totalizing impulses of official history.

History becomes vulnerable in the hands of the narrator as he goes on placing his own versions of events, changing and revising his version to suit the occasion:

> It made me feel omniscient: I feel like a historian brought up face to face with some lost cause, some extinct line that he had chronicled (LTG 52).

Here we see the foregrounding of the artifice of the creative process.

And again:

I don't know if they swallowed this revised version... But there wasn't much more I could do. I had told them the truth at teatime and taught them doubt at dinner; no professional historian could have done more (LTG 52).

It is through such suspicion of received historiography and interrogating of official, nationalistic claims that Kesavan goes on to tackle the issue of Muslim minority and their place, contribution, and predicament during the volatile years of Freedom Movement and the Partition. One of the most notable instance of magical happenings in the novel is the disappearance or invisibility of Muslim nationalists.

But it must be noted that magic-realism or postmodern techniques are not the only means to resist dominant discourse. This study argues for the novel's capacity to act as a space for these sorts of negotiations irrespective of the generic niche occupied by a given novel. It has repeatedly been contended that magical realism offers privileged access to non-Western cultures as compared with other forms of prose narrative. If, as Bakhtin maintains, the novel is an inherently dialogical form, then neither recourse to myth nor the use of a particular idiom is necessary for the creation of a polyglot text. As such, there is no reason to assume that realist narrative is necessarily hegemonic and incapable of incorporating diverse perspectives. Realist texts like Rohinton Mistry's Such a Long Journey and Nayantara Sahgal's Rich Like Us show powerful subversive potential and they disturb objective, official history in effective manner.

While Rushdie employs fantasy and satire and Tharoor adopts mythological situations and characters in depicting the Indian scene under the authoritarian regime of Mrs. Gandhi, Nayantara Sahgal's Rich Like Us gives us the only realistic depiction in Indian English fiction of the National Emergency. As O. P. Mathur says: "It is in Nayantara Sahgal's Rich Like Us, however, that the realities of this brief nightmarish period have been translated into human terms without any of their repulsiveness being lost. In this novel we find an intermingling of the individual and contemporary politics and how the suffocating political environment bears down upon the lives of a few sensitive people".[84]

Through her novels, Nayantara Sahgal writes her own project for the postcolonial life of the subcontinent. According to Indira Gandhi's formula one is expected to conform. In contrast to such simple formulas as the ones defended by Indira Gandhi's dictatorship, the

plot of Rich like Us contains different points of view, and Sahgal constructs characters both for and against the Emergency. Through their disagreement a rich and complex picture of the Emergency régime is composed.

Rushdie writes the tragedy of the nation in the postmodern, magic-realist style. Tharoor contemplates the tragedy of modern India within the framework of a cosmic comedy. Rohinton Mistry delineates the everyday life of common men and women realistically, and in doing so he charts the tragedy of hopes unfulfilled and ideas betrayed in postcolonial life of the nation. Rohinton Mistry's fiction incorporates the alternative views and voices of the marginalized, migrant voices, and this design displays a multifarious heterogeneity that is unsettling yet seeks to authentically represent the nervous tensions at the root of the hybrid experiences of people living on the margins of the nation.

Using harsh, brutal realism, Mistry in Such a Long Journey and A Fine Balance interrogates social, cultural, and political forms of oppression in postcolonial India. Laura Moss, in a powerful essay on Mistry has demonstrated how realism is as capable of resistance and subversion of power structures and domination as magic realism. Moss advances the important argument that postcolonial literature privileges experimental writing—particularly magic realist literature—as somehow more capable of providing a sustained critique of colonialism. Moss says:

> The concept of 'resistance' has been fetishised to the point where it is even often presented without an object. At the same time, there has been a critical elevation of writing perceived to be experimental or writing that plays with non-realistic form. Within postcolonial criticism, these simultaneous developments have converged in the production of a profusion of studies linking, and sometimes suggesting the interdependence of, political or social resistance and non-realist fiction.[85]

In discussing and exploring the subversive and postcolonial potentialities of such non-experimental texts such as those by Mistry and Sahagal's Rich Like Us, this kind of arguments are certainly useful.

Instead of the macro history of India, Mistry presents the microcosmic world of individuals and small communities. He makes the invisible stories of small, marginalized people by giving them fictional space in a realistic manner in his fictional re-writing of Indian history from their perspectives. In this manner, the novel denies the authority of the dominant discourse and exposes history as a discourse replete with ambiguity. Mistry very often presents multiple versions of the same event, as in the instance of his presentation of the various probabilities for the sudden demise of Lal Bahadur Shashtri (SALJ 114). He, thus, interrogates the singularity of historiographer's account. Even the reliability of the press is called in question when Gustad says to his son:

> Whatever you read in the paper, first divide by two—for the salt and pepper. From what's left, take off ten percent. Ginger and garlic. And sometimes, depending on journalist, another five percent for chilly powder. Then and only then, will you get the truth free of *masala* and propaganda.[86] (SALJ 68)

In its charting of the marginal lives of Parsi people, the novel becomes a social document. The novel gains its effective strength from interplay of fact and fiction, which places the novel in the category of "faction".

In a discussion of Mistry's use of history in A Fine Balance, Beverly Schneller refers to the strategy of adhering "to stricter use of history and make the events the dominate character, to merge function with form and content".[87] We see such a strategy in Mistry's Such a Long Journey, where he records historical facts and events with accuracy and the tides of history dominate the direction of the story-line. Reading the realistic novels of Mistry, we come to the realization that it is history which gives power to the language of fiction. David Cowart maintains that "... history makes its greatest contribution when it supplies the creative artist with raw material".[88] Mistry's use of history is focused more on the situations of the characters he creates which are emblematicof the Indian people. Realist writers like Sahgal and Mistry transform key moments inIndian history into readable fiction and popular history. They are not Indian historians but they are invoking the historical thinking which R. G. Collingwood held was necessary for historical writing.[89]

Thus, narrativization of history, whether done in magic-realist or traditional realist forms, fills in the gaps and fissures of traditional historiographies and it is in this context that history-fiction interface acquires significance. The excavation of hidden/repressed history as well as the issue of history-fiction interface in postcolonial novels becomes more urgent when we come to partition fictions, and in the last section we are going to discuss the crucial importance of literary interventions into history via these Partition texts.

IV.

The Partition of the Indian subcontinent is a cataclysmic event of such a magnitude and scale that historiographies of the sub-continent has so far failed to address it fully. The Partition determined the destinies of three nations and its continuing effects haunt the psyche of the sub-continent. Alok Bhalla in his "Introduction" to a collection of Partition stories in English translation states that when it comes to Partition, "there is not just a lack of great literature, there is, more seriously, a lack of great history".[90] The celebratory narratives of anti-colonialism and nationalism of conventional historiography have focussed, more on the unifying force of nationalism and Independence than on the divisive forces that led to the Partition and the painful experiences of the Holocaust.In the words of Priya Kumar history "has traditionally chosen to excise and exorcise from its telling" the "affective dimensions" of the Partition—"dimensions of pain, shame, guilt, revenge, nostalgia".[91] This strategy has allowed historians (until recently), to efface thebrutality of Partition and see murder, rape, and abduction as both inexplicableand as "little events"[92] marginal to the larger political processes thatconstitute the core of their story.

Since the 1980s, there has been a remarkable efflorescence of scholarly writing on these events which started a radical re-evaluation of the events of 1947. Subaltern, feminist, literary and psycho-social readings have come to the fore, as scholars and activists, historians and social scientists have called into question the unitary notion of Partition fostered by the Indian nation-state, offering new visions that emphasise the centrality of gender, sexuality, caste, religion and nationalism in mediating the violence that swirled around the end of

Empire in India. Ritu Menon, one of the foremost of this new band of scholars has summed up the nature and significance of this alternative archive:

> Noteworthy about this recent trend is its decentering of the nationalist narrative of the struggle for independence. The surfacing of fragmentary, autobiographical or literary texts and testimonies, and the diversity of methodological approaches adopted—anthropological, legal, geographical, socio-historical, feminist and so on—have served to complicate the discussion not just on Partition but on, for instance: the durability of the nation-state in South Asia, and the immutability of religious community; the relationship between nationalism, gender and sexuality, or secularism and citizenship; of identity politics and the demarcation of boundaries of all kinds.[93]

In contrast to the "containable text" of official/nationalist history of the partition, historians and scholars now attempt to write a "polyphonic text"[94] of this colossal event in which the familiar archive is supplemented with the Other of formal history—family histories, oral histories, autobiographical accounts, military records, as well as the experiences and roles of minor andsometimes subaltern historical actors such as women, children, and dalits. These counter-histories are significant in their potential to disrupt the normative versions of Indian independence by telling the story not only of India's coming into nation-statehood, but also of the simultaneous event of Partition and the turmoil that it wreaked.

Along with this, literature, too, came to be recognized as having a significant role to play in this counter-official re-narrativization of the Partition. Indeed, it can be said that Partition is much more than a historical fact, however, for it has served and continues to serve as a compelling literary theme that has engendered a substantial body of fiction on the subcontinent, fiction that is startling in terms of its diversity of focus, style and treatment. Suketu Mehta unwittingly acknowledges the presence of that unwritten epic when he writes:

> There are millions of Partition stories throughout the subcontinent... All over the map of the subcontinent there is an entire generation of people who have

been made poets, philosophers, and storytellers by their experience during the Partition.[95]

Literature (along with the other arts, including film), has had a privilegedplace in the task of bearing witness to the events of 1947. Historians and scholars like Gyan Pandey, Alok Rai and Kavita Daiya have argued in favour of the literary archive to be assigned the place of the preferred other to the historical narrative. These scholars have pointed out that the literary representations of the partition is indeed one of those alternate sites of historicity which effectively addresses the silence on partition in Indian historiography and provides a rich, complex, and often contestatory perspective on national emergence and national belonging. This literary archive is larger than that of the official or even the oral historians and gives evidence of what Daiya calls "counter-publics" or a "postcolonial public sphere".[96]

From the 1950s to date, novelists on either side of the border have been trying to grapple with this traumatic period. As has been pointed out by Meenakshi Mukherjee, the theme of Partition has been a pervasive one in Indian bhasha literatures. If the nationalist movement against the British and the figure of Gandhi was an all-pervasive presence in the novels written in the 1930s and 40s, then the Partition of the country was a defining moment both in the life of the newly created nation as well as that of her citizens.[97] It was therefore perhaps inevitable that post-Independent Indian English Fiction displays a strong and abiding preoccupation with Partition. From Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan (1956) to Shauna Singh Baldwin's What the Body Remembers(2000), the Partition has been a recurrent theme in Indian English fiction, with a new perspective on the event emerging in each succeeding decade. In this last section, we are going to examine Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines, Siddhartha Deb's The Point of Return, Shauna Singh Baldwin's What the Body Remembers, and Mukul Kesavan's Looking Through Glass as partition novels and see how in their own ways, these texts bear witness to the unspeakable trauma of violence, loss and dislocation caused by the events of Partition, revealing in a more substantial way the interface between history and narratives, and the significance of this interface in writing about traumatic events like partition.

In his attempt to tell the story of Partition and its enduring trauma from fresh and revisionist perspective, Amitav Ghosh's novel The Shadow Lines utilises the form of family

saga with a large array of characters spanning different generations and traversing different time frames. Unlike many other novels dealing with the Partition, Ghosh's novel is a profound exploration of the aftermath of the holocaust that still haunts the psyche of the sub-continent. Another important achievement of Ghosh is that his narrativization of the aftermath of the Partition simultaneously deals with larger political concepts like 'freedom' and 'nationalism', and for an interrogation of the concept of a 'border'. He puts forward the perspective that a border, supposedly uniting those who are inside it as well as differentiating them from those who are other, in modem times divides more than it unites. On the question of borders, Ghosh is on record as having said:

> What interested me first about borders was their arbitrariness, their constructedness—the ways in which they are 'naturalized' by modern political mythmaking. I think this interest arose because of some kind of inborn distrust of anything that appears to be 'given' or taken-for-granted (...). I think these lines are drawn in order to manipulate our ways of thought: that is why they must be disregarded.[98]

The novel traverses the territory of the historical as it goes on to portray the experiences of a Bengali family's past and present which are irrevocably shaped by larger and terrible historical events—particularly by Bengal's Partition and the Pakistan Civil War of 1971, which led to the creation of Bangladesh. Comparing this Partition novel with an earlier Partition texts like Singh's Train to Pakistan (1956) and Manohar Malgonkar's A Bend in the Ganges (1965), John Thieme points out that while the earlier Partition novels emphasized the horrors of the Partition, the second generation of Partition novels, of which The Shadow Lines is, according to Thieme, the finest one, "look in the rear-view mirror and consider the longer-term consequences, both communal and personal, that followed in the wake of Partition and these often involved traumas that were as much psychic as physical".[99] It is because of this depiction of the "psychic" and personal side of Partition trauma that novels like The Shadow Lines and Deb's The Point of Return become important historical document in filling up the gaps and silences in official, nationalist historiography.

It is a fact that equally in history and in literature, both the documentation and the representation of the Partition are tilted to the Punjab side, in the sense that both historians and novelists appear to be more concerned with and interested in the events that took place in Punjab in 1947. When it comes to the Indian novel in English, one can discern a similar slant towards the Partition experience in the Punjab. The fact that the eastern side of India also experienced (and continue to do so) the trauma of Partition, is often ignored. Siddhartha Deb's novelThe Point of Return, along with Ghosh's The Shadow Lines, is one of the very few literary texts that deals with the partition of the eastern side of the subcontinent.

Using the theme of Partition, Deb deals with various important issues like 'home' and exile of those who came to India as victims of Partition. That's why this narrative depiction of Partition carries more weight than an academic presentation of facts and figures that leaves out the human dimension and the terrible legacy and wound. With a dexterous blending of private lives and public events into a desultory mosaic of history, both The Shadow Lines by Ghosh and The Point of Return by Deb reflect on the violence and trauma of Partition and the resultant condition of exile of a great number of people in the subcontinent.

Dr. Dam and many others like him whose parents came to India after the partition remain "the unhomely" in spite of their dedicated service to the nation. The novel is about his search for "home" as well as about his son Babu who again falls victim of racial hatred during the time of state partitions along tribal lines. What then is "home", asks the novel, as boundaries shift, new lines are drawn between ethnic groups and states, and landscapes become unexpectedly hostile. There are many invocations of history and historicity in the novel. In his search for lost connections and attempts to fill the voids of history, the narrator is confronted by a disjuncture between history (with its national moorings) and something more evasive. It is particularly so in the margins of the nation-state where this novel is set: "History, dragged so far from the metropolitan centres, from the rustic mainlands, will tell you nothing. In the North- East...history lies defeated, muttering solipsistically from desultory plaques put up to commemorate visiting politicians" (TPOR 157).

History, as Hayden White has demonstrated, retains the rhetorical tropes of narrative fiction, creating a plot where the Antecedent (or villain) generates the Consequence (or victim), and it plays with variations of this plot, so that we may have a historical narrative dealing with several Consequences. Thus all history is moral in intent, and necessarily plays

out the chronicle in the rhetorical tones of an inevitable genre (for example tragedy, melodrama or farce). Furthermore, since History's rhetorical tropes are inadequate to the substantiality of suffering, it deals with anguish by quantifying pain.[100] In the case of the Partition, Indian history has mainly seen the event in terms of cause and effect, statistics etc. on the other hand, the novels are intent on using similar tropes to focus on the consequent human tragedies and enduring affliction that the histories could not arrogate. In novels like The Point of Return, The Shadow Lines and What the Body Remembers, we have narrativization of the same history but which chart the human suffering and pain of the holocaust. Through narrativization of traumatic history and blurring the boundaries of history and fiction, these novels have performed crucial political and epistemic role in displacing the grand objectivity of history and revealing the faultiness of such official truths.

Shauna Singh Baldwin's What the Body Remembersis also a novel on Partition that fills another lacuna or silence in Indian historiography. What the Body Remembers is probably the first novel where the story of partition is told solely from the point of view of Sikh characters. More significant than this is the fact that the story of those terrible days are entirely told from the perspective of Sikh women. In an essay, Baldwin enumerates the problems she faced in writing this book:

> But my story is set in the Sikh community—and it's just one story, an imagined one. My first problem in looking at the material was that, being a minority community everywhere, theology is often prized above history amongst Sikh scholars. My second problem was that many Indian historians learned their trade from British historybooks. My challenge to myself was not to tell the story of the Sikhs from the standpoint of the men--there a few non-fiction books that cover their story--but from the perspective of the Sikh women. This quickly became very frustrating because books on Sikh history are usually written by men. They contain on average a single index entry under "women" or mention a maximum of two Sikh women by name. As a member of one of the few religions in the world that actually says women and men are equal, and demands that a Sikh woman be called "princess" to show how valuable she is, I

found my research running up against the difference between theory and practice. My solution was to resort to oral histories and imagination.[101]

What the Body Remembers is a rich and multi-layered narrative that traces the fragmentation of India, from 1928 to just after Partition in 1947, through the lives of Satya, her husband, Sardarji, and Roop, the girl who becomes his junior wife. The lives of the two Sikh women are set against the background of intense social upheaval which defined the subcontinent at the moment of its Independence. Baldwin's novel is explicitly a feminist dialogue with history. It has been observed by the new scholarships that Partition is a subject that makes its female survivors particularly evasive, or renders them mute—either out of necessity or personal choice. Baldwin's novel is an attempt to interrupt this pattern of silence and make women speak as principal interlocutors in history. She consciously sets out to articulate the feminine reality of the time, and successfully explores the "other side of silence" as she concentrates on Sikh women's experiences of domestic and political turmoil.

Baldwin frames marriage as an allegory of national consciousness in pre-independence India. The partition in the novel is between Beauty (Roop) and Truth (Satya). The novel scrutinizes the split between communal and secular forces, through the division of marriage. It is a self-division that leads not only to the problems in the marriage, but culminates in the political violence of the country's partition.

What the Body Remembers is significant for the fact that it is one of those literary texts which address the lacuna of history proper—namely the silence regarding the plight of women during the Partition. Women were arguably the worst victims of the Partition of India in 1947 and endured displacement, violence, abduction, prostitution, mutilation, and rape. However, on reading histories of the division of India, one finds that the life-stories of women are often elided, and that there is an unwillingness to address the atrocities of 1947. As already discussed, literature has come to play an important role in interrupting state-managed histories. Baldwin employs Satya and Roop to illuminate the social standing of women in 1947. Baldwin re-inscribes the experiences of women whose bodies bore the brunt of violence and sexual assaults. The issue of the bodily aspect of violence and the question of history and embodiment also found in Kesavan and most of these writers are taken up more elaborately in a later chapter.

Though the larger historical pictures regarding colonial domination, Freedom Movement etc remain, for the most part, in the background of the novel, we still get the sense of these historical events seeping into the private spheres. Baldwin tries to keep a balanced narrative which incorporates both the public and the private sphere. For example, when Sradarji is promoted by the British to the rank of Executive Engineer of the Irrigation Department at Khanewal, his wife Satya cannot share the joy of her husband as she is full of suspicion and distrust of the British:

> This posting and your new position are another bone that the British can throw before Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru, hoping to appease the non-cooperators and all the self-rule agitators, justify the blood spilled and the pain endured by protesters. [102]

Of course, a large part of What the Body Remembers deals with the issue of bigamy that produces a wide range of conflicts and tensions. As a historical narrative, the novel reveals a lot about rural landowners and/or English educated absentee landlords and their ways of life in the pre-Independent times. Yet the novel is about history and it leads the reader straight into the throes of the tortuous division of the sub-continent.

Baldwin avers that truth about the number of people killed in partition is distorted and varies according to the statistics of Indian and British historians. Political leaders are also heroes in the eyes of the people of one nation and trouble shooters for the people of the other community. Jinnah is the great hero for the people of Pakistan as he created a homeland for 90 million Muslims, while for 40 million Muslims, who were left behind in India he was an obstinate man who unleashed violence. What the Body Remembers transforms itself from being a novel about triangular marriage, into a saga of large-scale public agony.

The novels discussed above represent attempt to re-create and recuperate, through narrative, a life anterior to trauma whose loss formed the fabric of post-Partition life. But the most interesting and subversive piece of Partition fiction produced in the last couple of decades is unquestionably Mukul Kesavan's Looking Through Glass. Kesavan depicts the Partition from a perspective that is completely neglected in both historiography and literature. In the words of Tabis Khair:

> ...the entire issue of partition is depicted from a fourth (and often obscured) perspective—not the official colonial European perspective evoking the 'inherent divisibility' of India in the absence of Eurocentric cohesion, not the official Indian perspectives stressing the villainy of Jinnah or the 'backward fundamentalism' of the Muslims, not the official Pakistani perspective stressing the villainy of the Congress and the 'fundamentalism' of the Hindus, but the fourth perspective of Muslim Congressman, the men and women who 'disappeared' (literally in the novel) due to the Congress' unwillingness to recognize their existence and who remained opposed to both Jinnah's Pakistan and the Congress' vision of a socio-politically homogenized India.[103]

The Hindutva-ridden politics of the Congress never trusted the loyalty of Muslims (not to speak of the common Muslims) who were nationalists and were always loyal to the Congress. They regarded the nationalist Muslims like Masroor in the novel as traitors when they opposed the Quit India Resolution. It is due to this overtly Hindu politics of seeing that people like Masroor and all those other nationalist Muslims disappeared when the Quit India Resolution was passed, and these Muslims were stigmatized as traitors. The novel narrativizes the story of these forgotten Muslim nationalists before and after the Partition. The story of Partition depicted in the novel is not the usual story as told by the British or the nationalists on both sides. This narrativization, since it veers away from the usual perspectives, reveal many interesting sides to the way we study or think about the Partition.

The narrator in Looking Through Glass has a stint as a waiter at the Cecil hotel in Shimla. One night he serves on M. A. Jinnah and he asks Jinnah if he really wants the country partitioned. The Jinnah resurrected by Kesavan is not Stanley Wolpert's or Indian nationalist historiographical version, but the Jinnah in Ayesha Jalal's book. In her book The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan (1988), Ayesha Jalal has argued for Jinnah's role as a barrister for the Muslim minority rather than the traditionally understood role of Jinnah as Moses leading the Muslims out of Egypt. It is this history that is at the center of recent perspectives on partition history such as Jalal's book and Ashim Roy's "The High Politics of India's Partition" (1993).[104] These texts intervene radically in accepted

accounts of Partition which automatically associate the Muslim League with the Partition of India and the Congress with the mobilization for a unified India. As we see in Kesavan's novel, the Congress was not at all free from fundamental line of thought and their policies and their brand of nationalism went a long way in widening the gap between the Hindus and the Muslims. Ashim Roy brings attention to the previously suppressed section of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's book where Azad "points his finger in a much more determined manner at Nehru's [and the Congress'] responsibility for the partition".[105]

Mukul Kesavan's Looking Through Glass questions this perception regarding the Muslim body as embodiment of otherness and duplicity, and also exposes the limits of Congress secularism and nationalism. In this oppositional project, his novel has affinities with the revisionist account of Ayesha Jalal. In her book, Jalal persuasively argues that any consideration of Jinnah's "demand for Pakistan supposedly elaborated in the 1940 Lahore Resolution," must "take account of the other two sides in the Indian political triangle, the Indian National Congress and the British," whether it be the Congress' "manoeuvrings in the Center and the Provinces" or the British "policies and initiatives".[106] Jalal also examines Jinnah's motive in his Pakistan demand as well as his mistaken assumptions.

Jalal sees Jinnah's Pakistan demand as a tactical move, a bargaining counter. Jinnah hoped that by making this demand, he would be able to bring both the Congress and the British to negotiations and force concessions out of Congress that would allow the Muslim-majority provinces to go their own way. But this did not happen that way and the British also did not stay to work on the settlement, as he had hoped. Such a contextualized reading forces us to question the orthodox perception of Partition which foregrounds the image of Jinnah as the principal instigator and controller of Partition. Such a perception has until now given the Congress a clean sheet to the Congress leaders and the British on the issue of responsibility for the Partition, projecting the blame onto the Muslim body. Looking Through Glass is one of those rare fictional texts that engages in such a contextualized reading of the Partition.

Narrativization of the Partition plays crucial roles in addressing the gaps and silences of official/orthodox historiographies. In Borders and Boundaries (2004), Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin remark that literature has "stepped in, at least partly, to record the full horror of Partition...In one sense, it can be considered a kind of social history not only because it approximates reality (what Alok Rai calls "a hypnotic, fascinated but also slavish imitation of

reality") but also because it is the only non-official contemporary record we have of the time, apart from reportage".[107] The human experience of Partition, we are told, "went unrecorded, unverbalised; historical fiction, thus, "validates' historical truth precisely in its power to represent".[108] Literary texts on the subject of Partition, therefore, have been written and are read emphatically within artistic conventions of realism and tend to be usually treated as surrogate documentation.

It must be noted that the treatment of the theme of Partition itself changed significantly over the decades. Earlier novels on Partition such as Manohar Malgonkar's A Bend in the Ganges and Kushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan were preoccupied with political events, probably because the authors lived very near to the events they describe.Their novels are full of gory details of the actual events during the Partition. Novelists writing at a later date, especially in the 1980s, whether they be Anita Desai, Bapsi Sidhwa who did not exactly live through the Partition the way Malgonkar and Singh did, or Kesavan, Amitav Ghosh or Singh Baldwin who belong to a more distanced post-Partition generation, clearly have a very different perspective from those writing in the 1950s and the 1960s. Desai's and Sidhwa's novels (Clear Light of Day and Ice-Candy-Man, respectively) have a more psychological orientation, and they primarily focus on women and their predicament at the time of the Partition. Kesavan, Ghosh and Deb, on the other hand, depict the continuing trauma of the Partition. They are not concerned so much with representing the cataclysm as in exploring issues like limit of nationalism, betrayal of post-Partition political structures, exile, migration, and the ideas of "home" and "nation".

Concepts of nation and nationhood are crucially linked with the theme of Partition. The idea of nationalism as a patriotic ideal had much currency during the struggle for independence. But later generations of writers like Rushdie, Ghosh, Tharoor and Mistry are not so enthusiastic about this celebratory account of nationalism. This is a very interesting fact that the recent Partition novels from the 1980s onwards are also meditations of the fate of the nation—rather an interrogation of the "Nation". Be they Partition narratives or otherwise, Indian English Writings of the last three decades concern themselves with theorizing about the idea and validity of the nation-state.As discussed earlier, this critical attitude to nation was the result of a growing disillusionment of the nationalistic ideals of a unitary nation and the failure of the Nehruvite consensus under tremendous socio-political pressures that is

characteristic of the 1980s. Instead of being celebratory of the nation-state, these writers point out the fatal flaws of the nation-state and acknowledge its internal divisions and disjunctures. In the next chapter, we discuss the kind of "elegiac nation" that emerge in these texts.

V.

What this chapter set out to discuss was how recent Indian English writings from the 1980s onwards have attempted to narrativize history, to communicate historical facts in ways that do not fulfil conventional historiographical expectations. We have discussed the various ways in which they have represented history through fiction that not only contest and redress colonial/nationalist historiographies but also revealed the textuality of history by foregrounding the question of history-fiction interface. Partition narratives are testimony to this, as Vishnupriya Sengupta says, "Stories or rather fiction, in particular, have pointed to the devastating consequences of the border for the ordinary citizen, the brunt of which are being borne to this day".[109]

It may be worthwhile here to quote Jacques Ehrmann's formulation: ''History and literature have no existence in and of themselves. It is we who constitute them as the object of our understanding.''[110] Both fiction and history are ultimately human constructs, and both are incapable of revealing the absolute truth. It is therefore up to us to interpret the social, cultural and ideological contexts presented to comprehend the truth behind the cultural sign systems of history and fiction. The novels taken up for consideration are narratives that engage history in different ways. These texts—varied in their linguistic, ideological and stylistic aspects—present their own unique versions of historical events. They employ different modes of knowledge to draw out the ''micro-history'' embedded within the historical event, and resonate the voice of the ''Other'', a creation of partisan politics. While Rushdie, Ghosh and Deb utilize the power of memory to create a radically individual narrative that is meant to supplant a dominant, hegemonic conception of history, their forms are different. Rushdie as a postmodern historian employs magic realist tradition, and makes use of a structure andform that recalls the oral epics of India with their multiple digressions and recurrentimprovisations.

Through the fallible means of memory Rushdie points atfragments, fissures, perforations, and cracks. He reveals the ambiguous nature of history and reality. His narrator explains:

> I have been only the humblest of jugglers-with-facts; and that in a country where the truth is what it is instructed to be, reality quite literally ceases to exist, so that everything becomes possible except what we are told is the case; and may be this was the difference between my Indian childhood and Pakistani adolescence—that in the firstI was beset by an infinity of alternative realities, while in the second I was adrift, disoriented amid an equally infinite number of falsenesses, unrealities and lies (MC 389).

As in Midnight's Children, in The Great Indian Novel Shashi Tharoor also employs a post-modern fictive strategy which emphasizes process than product. We see this characteristic of historiographic metafiction in Sealy and Kesavan also.

In Ghosh and Deb's narrativization of history also we find, as in Rushdie, an overwhelming profusion of events, memories and places. But unlike Rushdie's postmodern, magic realist form, they write, more or less, in the realist tradition. Mistry, Baldwin and Sahagal also prove that realism can also be effectively used to re-write and subvert dominant historiography. In some cases, like Red Earth and Pouring Rain, The Great Indian Novel, by obliterating the line between myth and history, the novelist exposes the falsity of the conventional Western fact/fiction opposition and thus acquires the status of an *itihaskar*.

These novels, in their attempt at narrativizing history, offer an alternative version to state-sponsored histories where the "small voices" of history do not generally figure. The history narrated in these novels makes room for the histories remembered, narrated, mythologised by common people. In such a fictional historiography, the lives of the people, the folk traditions of the community and vulgar humor of the subaltern classes are posited against the grand colonial and neo-colonial reason and monologism. Partha Chatterjee theorises "the popular" which is "the timeless truth of the national culture, uncontaminated by colonial reason. In poetry, music, drama, painting, and now in film and the commercial arts of decorative design, this is the form in which a middle-class culture, constantly seeking to 'nationalize' itself, finds nourishment in the popular".[111] Chatterjee does not use the term

subaltern in relation to his description of the popular but the two terms overlap. This entails that the term "subaltern" undergoes a radical metamorphosis with its integration of the positive connotations of the 'popular'. Saleem explicitly emphasises Padma's illiteracy and lower class background as signs of the undiluted popular. As her popular or subaltern credentials are stressed, their usefulness for Saleem is pointed out: "Padma is leaking into me...with her down-to-earthery, and her paradoxical superstition, her contradictory love of the fabulous" (MC 38). After Padma stormed out Saleem misses the assuring presence of the subaltern Padma: "Padma would have believed me; but there is no Padma" (MC 167). Thus the popular audience, Padma, helps shape the narrative, and Saleem tries "to use Padma's muscles as my guides" in reading her boredom or disbelief: "The dance of her musculature helps to keep me on the rails; because in autobiography, as in all literature, what actually happens is less important than what the author can manage to persuade his audience to believe ..." (MC 270–1). But while Saleem uses Padma's subalternity for his own purposes, he remains convinced of his own superiority and uses his middle-classness in order to persuade Padma and Mary Braganza of his sanity and accountability: "call it education, or class-origin...By my show of erudition and by the purity of my accents, I shamed them into feeling unworthy of judging me" (MC 212).

Padma can be read like an ironic demonstration of Chatterjee's description of the popular: "The popular enters hegemonic national discourse as a gendered category. In its immediate being, it is made to carry the negative marks of concrete sexualized femininity. Immediately, therefore, what is popular is unthinking, ignorant, superstitious, scheming, quarrelsome, and also potentially dangerous and uncontrollable. But with the mediation of enlightened leadership, its true essence is made to shine forth in its natural strength and beauty: its capacity for resolute endurance and sacrifice and its ability to protect and nourish".[112] Padma Mangroli is the woman as nurturer and comforter and her resolute and assiduous nature is stressed by Saleem. She only endangered Saleem by accidentally poisoning him with a herbal potion which was supposed to resurrect his 'manhood' (MC 193). Despite her subaltern position, her devotion to Saleem is unmistakable: "Only believe, mister, how much I have your well-being at heart!...It was my own foolish pride and vanity, Saleem baba, from which cause I did run from you, although the job here is good, and you so much needing a looker-after...So then I thought, how to go back to this man who will not love me

and only does some foolish writery?" (MC 192–3). Padma, however, also counteracts her authenticating function when she refuses to believe him and refers to his historiographical mission as "foolish writery". For this reason, Saleem rarely lets her speak for herself. Saleem, in his role of mediator of "enlightened leadership", has problems keeping Padma in her place. Chatterjee mentions that the "popular is also appropriated in a sanitized form, carefully erased of all marks of vulgarity, coarseness, localism, and sectarian identity."[111] Saleem, in contrast, emphasises these traits in order to keep this independent, strong woman under discursive control. He patronisingly points out her lower class behaviour and speech, portrays her as unbeautiful, describes her physically exhausting job, and associates her name with excrement.

As a conclusion we may say that contemporary writers like the ones under the present study become historians in an attempt to fill in the gaps left by traditional totalitarian history while at the same time the philosophers of history try to achieve the same aim through the exploration of the narrative mechanisms of history-writing. It is under such developments that Gyan Prakash spoke of the possibilities of a "third kind of history" that we can see emerging in the fictional works of these writers.

These novels, in contesting the grand narratives of History, seem to favour a pluralistic and flexible understanding of history and communities and of identity. The novels defy a state-sponsored national identity and highlight the erosion of idealism that accompanied the birth of the nation-states. They subvert stereotypes ingrained in the national imaginary and underline concepts of plurality and multitude and specificity, despite official history's tendency to valorise the abstract idea of an India and restructure the unitary national identity necessitated by the priorities of the freedom movement. It can be said that in their revisionist historiographic project, these writers practice what Nietzsche calls "critical history", against "monumental" and "antiquarian" history. This "critical history" acts as a counter-narrative to, and a critical commentary on not only the official history ofBritish imperialism and postcolonial nationalism, but also on the celebratory account and validity of the postcolonial nation-state and the very idea of the Nation, an issue we are going to examine in the next chapter.

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Chapter: II

History and Nation

...the substance of nationalism as such is always morally, politically, humanly ambiguous. This is why moralising perspectives on the phenomenon always fail, whether they praise or berate it. They will simply seize on one face or another of the creature, and will not admit there is a common head conjoining them.

—Tom Nairn, The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism.

The nation has been seen as the product of history. If history is a temporal process with progression and events in time, the nation is the spatial expression of this temporal process. The nation "has functioned as the signifier of the identity of its masses while duplicating the formation of the supplement through its boundaries. History has invested in territories representations of its constructs, transforming these into representational sites".[1] Literary discourses on postcolonial literature in recent years have located the meaning and significance of postcolonial texts within the spatial sites of "nation". If the postcolonial novel is to be seen as a site of resistance (in its ideological positioning within cultural institutions as well as with their representations of history), its material referent and its condition of production is the postcolonial nation. But already the totalising claim of history has been disrupted, as we have discussed in the previous chapter. This disruption of the grand narrative of history forces us to see and articulate the nation in alternative ways.

Indian English writing, from its infancy, has been preoccupied with representing the nation. This national dimension of Indian English writing is undoubtedly its most distinctive feature. Indian English novels as a postcolonial genre emerged out of the colonial encounter, and it is only natural that "its concern has been with that equally postcolonial entity, the nation-state".[2] India as a postcolonial nation is a classic case of the history-nation confluence. Writers have been much beholden to this confluence as both *history* and *nation* come together to shape what political scientist, Sunil Khilnani terms, after Nehru, "the idea of India".[3]

This "idea of India" as emerges in the post-1980s Indian English novels is very unlike the portrait of the nation in the earlier novels of nationalist writers like Anand, Rao and Narayan. Products of a particular historical period, these novels have been influenced by the new ideas of nationalism that were in circulation in academia as well as literary circles in the 1980s. This was a time when the very idea of a unitary, homogeneous nation-state was in crisis in the face of failure and collapse of the Nehruvian nation, and Rushdie and the novelists who emerged in his wake reveal a strong critical attitude towards the idea of a stable, fixed, secular nation.

One of the most common tendencies of the new novels in English is their insistence on narrating the state of the nation from the perspective of personal stories, and to interlink the story of the individual with that of the nation. So when Saleem, the protagonist of Rushdie's novel Midnight's Children declared that "at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world....thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks, I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country" (MC 9), he was setting in motion a conceptual framework which was to become a dominant one for the writers to follow. In the words of Rege, "In Midnight's Children, Rushdie's reconfiguration of the relationship between the Self and the Nation opened up space that proved to be very enabling for new Indian English writers in the eighties". Rushdie's novel helped Indian English writers to break down and come out of the "conceptually limiting and artistically stultifying" choices between "self and nation, loyalty or betrayal, modernity or tradition" that characterized the earlier novels, and this freedom helped the writers in re-imagining the nation in a socially and politically engaged way.[4] Thus we have novels like Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines, a bildungsroman and a family story like Midnight's Children, and a scathing critique of the idea of nationalism; I. Allan Sealy's The Trotter Nama chronicles the family drama of the Trotters and it's a fabulative history of the nation from the rare perspective of the Anglo-Indian community.

In their critical attitude towards the nation, most of the writers tend to see the nation as a myth, a construct, rather than something fixed and originary. In this also, Midnight's Children proved to be a signpost of things to come, and it actually emerged much earlier than many of the groundbreaking theoretical works like those by Benedict Anderson, Renan, and Bhabha. In the novel, he emphasizes the "imaginary" nature of the newly created nation in a famous key passage

in the final chapter of Book I, entitled "Tick, Tock". The narrator, Saleem Sinai, commenting on the momentous event of Indian Independence says here:

> (...)a nation which had never previously existed was about to win its freedom, catapulting us into a world which, although it had five thousand years of history, (...) was nevertheless quite imaginary; into a mythical land, a country which would never exist except by the efforts of a phenomenal collective will – except in a dream we all agreed to dream... India, the new myth—a collective fiction in which anything was possible, a fable rivalled only by the two other mighty fantasies: money and god. (MC 112)

This idea of the constructed and mythic nature of the nation initiates in the writings of Rushdie, Ghosh, Sealy and Kesavan a strong interrogative attitude towards the divisive, monologic and narrow, essentialized concept of nation that official Congress nationalism sought to propagate. In fact, these novels, in their re-narration of the nation are not celebratory but elegiac over the failure of the promise and utopia of anti-colonial nationalism. The novels reveal how anti-colonial nationalism has become self-destructive, violent and repressive in the hands of postcolonial ruling elites. In Midnight's Children, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru identifies new-born Saleem's life with the life of India itself, and celebrates his birth in glorious terms: "You are the newest bearer of that ancient face of India which is also eternally young. We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own" (MC 122).

As the novel goes ahead to chart the life of Saleem we see the growth of the postcolonial nation itself. But with the passage of time, the unlimited potential of Saleem and the nascent republic as envisioned by Nehru at their moments of births began to collapse. We see Saleem is made impotent by the machinations of a repressive regime. Battered too much by history, he becomes disillusioned and "fullofcracks". In his physical disintegration and approaching death, we see the cracking up of the postcolonial nation itself. Midnight's Children depicts a nationwhere growing sectarianism and communal violence, and repressive state-machineries destroyed the promise of a unified India.

In novels like Midnight's Children, The Shadow Lines, The Great Indian Novel, Such a Long Journey, and Looking Through Glass, the history of the nation itself is shown to be marked by contrasting promise and disappointment. This scathing critique of the nation and official nationalism was taken up by almost all the writers that emerged after Rushdie. In Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines, we have the unforgettable character Tridib who (like Ghosh) underlines the importance of the role of imagination in the construction of the nation when he teaches the young narrator to "use (my) imagination with precision" (TSL 24). Ghosh remains committed to the idea of a heteroglossic nation and is vehemently opposed to the separatist, self-defeating logic in the nationalist construction of boundaries. Through the character of Tridib, Ghosh demonstrates how imagination could help one to see beyond the arbitrary borderlines and exclusionary politics of a rigid nation, and could carry one "beyond the limits of one's mind to other times and other places, and even, if one was lucky, to a place where there was no border between oneself and one's image in the mirror" (TSL 29). This desire to go beyond the divisive shadowy lines of a modern nation-state is crystallized in Tridib's yearning to play Tristan, "a man without a country, who fell in love with a woman-across the-seas" (TSL 186).

These writers took up the challenge of finding out what went wrong with the nation by looking at history from a fresh perspective and challenging official versions of history and nation and by recovering the dignity and subjecthood of its people in their many and various voices. In Ghosh's novel, Tridib's (and later, the narrator's) yearning for a place where there was no border "between oneself and one's image in the mirror" (TSL 204) is "really a wish to return to a shared historical experience, a larger cultural and historical collectivity than the rigid boundaries of nationalist ideology will now accommodate".[5] Almost all the writers under the present study reveal a deep sense of disillusionment and suspicion regarding the exclusionary politics of the postcolonial nationalism; expose the betrayal of the promise of anti-colonial nationalism, and re-present an India which is characterized by heteroglossic, plural, ever-evolving identity.

This chapter offers to examine the representation of nation in Indian English writing. In the writings that emerged in the 1980s onwards, we perceive a strong critical attitude to the nation as in historiography: a characteristic feature of the eighties throughout the world. It will be argued that the picture of the nation that comes out is not celebratory as in its moment of birth but subversive and elegiac, riddled with crises and perforations. The basic premise of the chapter is that if these writers offer a revisionist history which contest nationalist and colonialist

historiography, the picture of the nation that emerge through this narrativization of history is one that is different than what nationalist or colonialist wish or present it to be. But before that it is necessary to outline some basic arguments and ideas from the vast and complex array of theoretical writings on the nexus between nation and novel/narration, as well as the relevance and future of postcolonial nation-state.

I.

The new theoretical frameworks that started emerging in the 1980s had exerted substantial influence on the writers in their project of critical re-assessment and re-narration of the nation from fresh perspective. Of course, Midnight's Children was much ahead of this boom in theories of nation; in fact it anticipated a great many theoretical aspects of theorists like Ernest Renan, Benedict Anderson and Homi K. Bhabha. But the post-Rushdie writers, and especially Ghosh, Sealy, Chandra, and Kesavan were much beholden to this critical canon and new ideas of nationalism. With regard to Ghosh, A. N. Kaul points out:

> ...in viewing nationalism as both an invention and a force for destruction, Ghosh had put himself alongside a considerable number of modern western scholars ranging from Elie Kedourie and Hans Kohn to Tom Nairn and Benedict Anderson.[6]

Another influence is that of Ernest Renan who emphasises on the role of imagination in the "invention" of the nation found its echoes in Amitav Ghosh and Salman Rushdie. For Ernest Renan and Ernest Gellner, nations are not natural entities.[7] It is something planned by people and created with solid boundaries on the map which are then defended and sometimes contested by people or groups of people. Nations are built upon particular foundations such as mutual sense of community and belonging that a group of individuals imagines it shares, invention of national traditions, feeling of ownership among the people, and the narration of history.

Scholars of different orientations, from the so called "statist" (such as Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm and John Breuilly) to the "culturalists" (among whom we find Anthony Smith, John

Hutchinson and Miroslav Hroch) agree on the crucial point that the nation is a construct. But while the statists believe the nation to be a political construct, for the culturalists, it is a cultural construct. Eríc Hobsbawm has argued that the nation depends upon the invention of national traditions which are made manifest through the repetition of specific symbols or icons. The performance of national traditions keeps in place an important sense of continuity between the nation's present and its past, and helps in the concoction of a unique sense of the shared history and common origins of its people. National symbols such as the flag or the national anthem, momentous events of history, monuments, legends and personalities take on an emotive and semi-sacred character, and they are part of the "invention of tradition" in which all nations participate.[8]

If the invention of tradition is central to the nation, then so is the narration of history. History and nation are closely interlinked entity and one cannot be thought of without the other. Postcolonial criticism approves that the narration of history is central to the narration of nation. In the case of India, as Partha Chatterjee's states, "the materials of Hindu nationalist rhetoric current in postcolonial India were fashioned from the very birth of nationalist historiography".[9] McLeod points out that "Nations are often underwritten by the positing of a common historical archive that enshrines the common past of a collective 'people'. The nation has its own historical narrative which posits and explains its origins, its individual character and the victories won in its name".[10] In reality, there are as many different versions as there are narrators; but a national history makes *one* particular version of the past the only version worthy of study.

Very often, in national histories, certain events and people or groups of people are given importance or celebrated, while others are marginalized. In the previous chapter, we have discussed many of the issues regarding this crucial fact and the ways in which postcolonial writers vehemently contest this monologic national history in an attempt to recover lost or suppressed voices within the nation. This has serious consequences when we see these writers dealing with the nation and representing it in their texts. The dissatisfaction of these writers with nationalist histories, their fictional contestation and revisionist projects have produced a nation which is very unlike the mythic, unified, solid nation that national history wishes it to be.

Rhetoric plays an important role in narratives such as that of nation and national identity. Etienne Balibar clearly articulates the rhetorical nature of what he terms "fictive ethnicity". Balibar declaratively states that, "*Every social community reproduced by thefunctioning of*

institutions is imaginary, that is to say, it is based on the projection of individual existence into the weft of a collective narrative, on the recognition of a common name and on traditions lived as the trace of an immemorial past (even when they have been fabricated and inculcated in the recent past)".[11]

Rhetoric plays a crucial role in actualizing and replicating ideologies. Victor Villanueva shows how language is often deliberately put to service in the narratives employed by nations and their leaders to advance their own hegemonic best interests.[12] Reinforcing this point is Anthony Smith who argues that, "The nation is an abstraction, a construct of the imagination; it is a community which is imagined as both sovereign and limited. It emerges when the realm of church and dynasty recede, and no longer seem to answer to mankind's craving for immortality".[13] Smith further asserts that it is narratives and myths, among other rhetorical entities which give life and strength to the nation itself.[14]

Of all the theoretical works, it was Benedict Anderson's seminal book Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (1983) which "has been (...) the most influential in the last few years [i.e.the1980s/1990s] in generating new theoretical ideas on nationalism".[15] It was Benedict Anderson who pointed out the crucial connection between culture and politics and bridged the gap between the statists and the culturalists. He insists on the fundamentally modernnature of the nation and also advocates the importance of culture; but he also reminds us that the nation is not an "imagined community" as such but an "imagined politicalcommunity".[16]

Imagined Communities inaugurates what may be termed the "formalist" position in studies of nationalism and literature. This has become the most common theoretical position adduced to subsequent attempts to explain or delineate the relationship between literature (and the novel in particular) and the nation and nationalism. Most importantly, when he speaks of nations and nationalisms being "cultural artefacts of a particular kind" he is referring specifically to modern cultural forms such as the newspaper and the novel.[17]

Anderson's explicates that, "from the start the nation was conceived in language, not in blood, and that one could be 'invited into' the imagined community. Thus today, even the most insular nations accept the principle of *naturalization* (wonderful word!), no matter how difficult in practice they make it".[18] Writing about the impact of Anderson's work on Indian historians and writers alike, Anjali Gera says:

Following Anderson's idea of 'nations' as 'imagined communities', the nation, along with other 'narratives', has been rigorously investigated in postcolonial discourse in the last two decades. This contestation is most directly addressed in the works of the Subaltern Studies group and the historiographic fiction of Rushdie, Ghosh and others.[19]

Benedict Anderson highlights this mythic, constructed idea of the nation when he says that the nation is "an imagined political community". It is imagined because "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion". The individual members of the nation thus share a "deep, horizontal comradeship" with many others.[20] In a similar vein, Timothy Brennan refers to the concept of "*natio*" –"a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging"—the emotive foundation for the organization, administration and membership of the "state", the political agency which enforces the social order of the nation.[21]

The awareness that there is an intimate relation between novel and national identity is not a recent one. Balzac, for example, hinted at this relation when he said that the novel was "the private history of nations". But recent literary and cultural criticism has provided the fuel and political urgency to this awareness. Contemporary critics, including postcolonial critics and theorists, have stressed how deep such intimate interconnections of the novel/nation nexus can go, spawning numerous and ever-increasing debates and examinations of the complexities and hitherto neglected issues involved in this relationship. Benedict Anderson's suggestion that the newspaper and the novel were the key media for "'representing' the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation" has revoutionized the way we think about nation and nationalism.[22] Referencing Benedict Anderson's work on nationalism, Timothy Brennan points out that the novel arose alongside the newspaper as *the* cultural product of the modern nation, and that it played a key role in creating the conceptual space of the nation:

> It was the *novel* that historically accompanied the rise of nations by objectifying the "one, yet many" of national life, and by mimicking the structure of the nation, a clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles. Socially, the novel joined the

newspaper as the major vehicle of the national print media, helping to standardize language, encourage literacy, and remove mutual incomprehensibility. But it did much more than that. Its manner of presentation allowed people to imagine the special community that was the nation.[23]

While the novel is not the only such imaginative vehicle, it remains the case that the rise of nation-states and the flowering of the genre have coincided across cultural contexts.

As mentioned earlier, the nation is the most important marker in postcolonial literature. Besides, the relationship between the Nation and Narration (which is the title of the now famous anthology of essays edited by Homi K. Bhabha, which pioneered the debate) is also crucial for the postcolonial writers and societies in general. But we must not ignore the fact that there are obvious complexities of relating literature to nationhood in any straightforward manner. Firstly, there is the question of the "Europeanness" of the novel form, which naturally gives rise to the problem of how well a European form could express the identity of formely colonized or now postcolonial national identities. Historically, the development of the novel paralleled the development of the European nation-states and the colonial empires. Postcolonial critics have come to see this as more than mere temporal coincidence. Edward Said has been concerned with the links between imperialism and cultural forms. In Culture and Imperialism, Said points to the strong dependence—both formal and ideological—of the French and English realist novels on the facts of the Empire. He goes on to add that without Empire, there would have been no European novel.[24]

While not everyone would want to see the novel as dependent upon the Empire, the fact that it is both formally and ideologically affected by imperialism creates a probem for postcolonial authors who want to work with the genre. A second point concerning the relation of the novel and the nation involves "the recognition that national identity, rather than being something which is essentially unchanging, is in fact historically mutable, and, rather than being simply or naturally 'there', is a historical construct, constituted in particular by the (ideologically loaded) narratives which particular communities tell themselves about who and what they are".[25]

This means that the novelists do not simply represent the nation, telling stories about it, but that their narratives are part of the continuing construction of the national identity. This point is crucial and helpful in understanding and for negotiating Frederic Jameson's famous argument

about Third World's texts as being essentially allegories of nation. That theses narratives are part of something that is always in the process of becoming is something that would be discussed at a later part of the chapter with regards to the texts by Indian English writers.[26]

Peter Morey contends that all these narratives of nation are just a part of a larger, ever changing, ever evolving picture of India: these novels are meaningful as chronicles of a larger narrative—indeed, as most of Indian English fiction is. The work of these novelists is meaningful, as part of this ongoing and evolving "big" story. This evolution was set in motion by such writers as Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, and a host of other novelists at the beginning of IWE's journey. Simply, we are all a part of one big story or protonarrative, our own "little" stories adding to its totality. We are not only a part of it, but also, in our own ways, making it happen, altering it in trying to understand and define it, in relation to ourselves. This big story is the story of the growth and development of modern India, starting at the beginning of the nineteenth century and continuing down to the present day.[27]

The fact of the social construction or imagining of the national identity also means that there is an actual or potential struggle at the level of discourse and ideology as different groups compete for their narratives of the nation to become recognized and legitimatized. In the case of India, this is a matter of great urgency and conflicts. This attempt of the various groups to make themselves a part of the national imaginary necessarily entails the need to tell a different story, to narrate their identity differently than the ones told or written by the former colonizers or the postcolonial elites/neo-colonials. It means a struggle over history of the formerly colonized and the postcolonial marginalized groups and communities who try to write newer versions of the national history, to excavate or recuperate forgotten, suppressed histories in re-narrating the nation and national identity. In the previous chapter, we have discussed this struggle over history, the need of revising it from alternative perspectives of people dismissed from the realm of History by the likes of Hegel and marginalized by the nation-state in the name of homogeneity, and also seen the different forms that such revisions of history take.

Another very important dimension of the relation between novel and national identity involves another meaning of representation. In the introductory chapter, we have already discussed the various meanings of the term "representation", including the sense in which the novelist represents the nation in terms of providing images in his/her books. At the same time, characters in those books may represent (take the place of/stand for) the nation at a symbolic or

allegorical level. The argument for the connection between individual and wider national community in this type of text has been most famously and contentiously made by Frederic Jameson:

> Third World texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic, necessarily, project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story ofthe private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation ofthe public third-world culture and society.[28]

Since its first appearance, the essay by Jameson has been taken to tasks by many critics, most famously by the Indian Marxist critic Aijaz Ahmad for, among other things, improperly universalizing claims and the reduction of all Third World writing, to a single model.[29] In the words of Imre Szeman

> The presumption that it is possible to produce a theory that would explain African, Asian, and Latin American literary production, the literature of China and Senegal, has been (inevitably) read as nothing more than a patronizing, theoretical orientalism, or as yet another example of a troubling appropriation of Otherness with the aim of exploring the West rather than the Other.[30]

More informally and anecdotally, however, within the field of postcolonial literary and cultural studies, Jameson's essay has come to be treated as little more than a cautionary tale about the extent and depth of Eurocentrism in the Western academy, or even more commonly, as a convenient bibliographic marker of those kinds of theories of third world literature that everyone now agrees are limiting and reductive.

After almost a quarter century later, it seems that Jameson's essay was frequently misread by some critics. It is now acknowledged by theorists and critics that Jameson's thesis had some truth and usefulness about it. To agree with some or all of Ahmad's criticisms of Jameson does not imply that *no* Third World or postcolonial texts function as national allegories, or that in no circumstances can an individual destiny be read as signifying the fate of the nation as a whole. To accept this would be to close off arbitrarily a number of useful ways of approaching some of the

works under the present study as well as numerous texts by writers from Kenya, India, Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, and other Asian and Latin American countries.

Imre Szeman sums up this belated acknowledgement of the usefulness and applicability of Jameson's thesis:

> Jameson's ''general'' theory of third worldliterary production offers a way of conceptualizing the relationship of literatureto politics (and politics to literature) that goes beyond the most common (and commonsense) understanding of the relations between these terms. Indeed, the concept of national allegory introduces amodel for a properly materialist approach to postcolonial texts and contexts...[31]

What is evident from the above theoretical issues is that the relation of novelistic representations and the nation and national identity in postcolonial sphere is complex and problematic. This is so because the things represented—the nation and the nation-state—occupy a position which in relation to postcolonialism is even more beset with problems. Others, such as Neil Larsen, have cautioned against claiming that the nation is a fundamentally narrated entity, for such an approach has become "a virtual routine of historical and postcolonial studies".[32] It would be futile to venture forth for a definite answer whether the nation is a "narrated" entity in itself or not.

Another important theoretical issue which is hotly debated in Postcolonial parlance is that of the relationship between the "nation" and the "state". It is an issue that figure prominently in the writings of Subaltern historians and scholars, and its echoes and reverbarations can be heard in contemporary Indian English novels. Following the account of the declaration of the Emergency in Midnight's Children, Saleem significantly equates himself for the first time with the "State" and not simply with the nation (MC 420). At the same time, Saleem and Indira's rivalry in representing India is explicitly addressed: "Unpalatable, awkward questions: did Saleem's dream of saving the nation leak, through the osmotic tissues of history, into the thoughts of the Prime Minister herself? Was my life-long belief in the equation between the State and myself transmuted, in 'the Madam's' mind, into that in-those-days-famous phrase: India is Indira and Indira is India? Were we competitors for centrality—was she gripped by a lust for meaning as profound as my own – and was that,

was that why...?" (MC 420) Saleem's claim that he has hatched a 'life-long belief in the equation between the State and myself' is an astonishing statement and an apparently misleading one. If his statement were consistent with his previous identification with the nation, this would suggest an equivalence of nation and state.

The relationship between nation and state has been a controversial topic in Indian historiography. Partha Chatterjee identifies the nature of the modern state as the origin of the problems of post-colonial India. He argues that even though the imagination of the nationalist élite during the anti-colonial struggle had autonomously created its own cultural community, the middle class had failed to project a post-colonial state form to match this imagined community: "The result is that autonomous forms of imagination of the community were, and continue to be, overwhelmed and swamped by the history of the postcolonial state. Here lies the root of our postcolonial misery: not in our inability to think out new forms of the modern community but in our surrender to the old forms of the modern state".[33] The state is described as having absorbed the imagined community, as "the unifying concept of 'nation'" was envisaged "as concretely embodied in the state".[34] In Midnight's Children, it seems that at the critical point of the beginning of the Emergency the image of the nation merges with the state. However, it does not seem to be portrayed as a de-masking of a fact that had existed all along as Chatterjee argues. In Midnight's Children, this subsuming of the nation under the state is associated with Indira Gandhi and her Emergency regime and does not so much suggest a fundamental problematisation of the modern state but the unaccountability of an authoritarian state apparatus after the suspension of democracy. Once Indira Gandhi appropriates the role of personifying the nation in her role as dictatorial commander of the state apparatus, Saleem's discourse of mirroring the nation basically stops. This is the point when the national allegory centered on Saleem finally breaks down, even though the midnight's children as a group still have an allegorical function in the novel.

But in spite of this seemingly unending maze of theories and debates regarding the relation between novel and nation, and postcolonial texts as essentially national allegories, the fact remains that we cannot ignore the importance of using the nation as an important marker in postcolonial literature. But we should do so with a full awareness that a homogeneous, centripetal category called the nation was important for ideological reasons and not literary ones. Major postcolonial writers have interrogated the idea of the nation, showing how we need to be aware of

multiple claims and intersections that followed Independence. As far as India is concerned, it is an indisputable fact that the entity of "nation" is the most visible and persistent point of "debate, reflection, and contestation" in the realm of Anglophone novel. Priyamvada Gopal argues that:

> ....the narration of nation gave the Anglophone novel in India its earliest and most persistent thematic preoccupation, indeed, its raison d'etre, as it attempted to carve out a legitimate space for itself.[35]

This chapter examines in detail this preoccupation of the issue of the nation in the English novels of the last two decades. But prior to that, an exploration of the nature of the relationship between Indian English Writing and nationalist ideology will be helpful.

II.

The earlier writers were speaking about the unifying forces of nationalism at the time of the Freedom Movement, and the period just after independence. In the early years of the twentieth century, the novel was seen as the form most capable of consolidating anti-colonial sentiment, of resisting authority, and of promoting social change. As such the novel was deemed the chosen literary form for nationalism. In the early phase of nationalism, writers like Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand were very much tied to the idea of a unified, monolithic India, whose novels like Kanthapura (1938) and Untouchable (1935) were examples of what Elleke Boehmer terms as narratives that had "the capacity to project communal wholeness, to enact nationalist wish-fulfilment in the text, and to provide role models".[36] These nationalistic texts were consciously about nation-building. They were not only commentaries on contemporary developments, but also attempts to find ways to make the "nation-in-the-making" work so that true nationhood might emerge. While Untouchable advocates Marxism for a utopian nation, the more idealistic text Kanthapura idolizes Gandhi and his vision of India. This period of dynamic nationalism gave rise to a literature which tended to portray the idealism of the anti-colonial struggle and the involvement of the people in it.

Another significant feature in which the earlier writers writing in English differ from the later writers of the Rushdie generation is the gap between the complex and conflicting reality of the nation and its literary representation. Their overt enthusiasm in projecting an essentialized, quintessential "Indianness" and a pan-Indian situation, led their writings towards rarefied ideological constructs, andin the words of Meenakshi Mukherjee, "to a certain flattening out of the complicated and conflicting contours, the ambiguous and shifting relations that exist between individuals and groups in a plural community".[37] Writing in the colonial language, Mukherjee contends that the writer keenly feels the pressureto prove her/his loyalty to the nation. It is this pressure that produces the"anxiety" in the writer to prove her "Indianness" as a "compensatory act" for the "supposed alienness/elitism of the language".[38]

The works of Raja Rao provide an instructive instance of the constructionof narratives with clearly identifiable indigenous concerns. In Kanthapura, apart from the obvious nationalist theme, Rao experiments with the English language as well as with conventional narrative modes to produce a nativized narrative mode that he believes to be more conduciveto his indigenous themes. In The Serpent and the Rope (1960), the concern with narrativizing the nation leads to an equation of the nation's"essence" with religion and spirituality. As Rumina Sethi, in her fulllength study of Rao notes, in Rao's later works "the romance/metaphysicalfar outweighs the history/nationalistic model".[39] Thus, instead ofworking on a literature drawing from an engagement with the broaderculture and its history (as Kanthapura, in many senses was), Rao started equating India with only its spiritual aspects, and the spiritual with just the esoteric Brahamanical world-view.

Other writers, in varying degrees, echo a similar preoccupation with identity that often manifests itself in what has come to be termed as the"East-West" theme. The demarcation of cultures, implicit in the genre, helps reinforce the indigenous identity of the writer. G. V. Desani's All About H. Hatterr (1948), a highly stylized, allegory of the psychology ofthe colonial subject, for instance, would be an ideal candidate for thegenre of "East-West" novels.

R. K. Narayan's novels self-consciously stray away from political concerns and ideologies.Set in the fictional town of Malgudi and concerned as they are with characters involved in the humandrama of life, his lay claimnot to this or that geographical region or social issue but to the whole of India and its "timeless" concerns. Delightful as Narayan's novels are, it does not help to overlook that the allegedly quintessentially "Indian" world of Malgudi is after all

Hindu, its ethos, upper-caste, its values resistant to change, not only from contact with the West, but also from indigenous political movements.

Unlike Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand who was deeply influenced by Marxist theory and social movements, attempts to represent the plight of the underprivileged sections in his novels like The Untouchable (1935) and Coolie (1936). Similarly, Kamala Markandya tries to foreground the sufferings of the poor Indian woman in her works like Nectar in a Sieve (1954). Yet, even in these novels that avow social realism, the representation of a community functioning in various local and specific registers is sacrificed in favor of the anxiety to present a pan-Indian situation. Once again, the need to portray "Indianness" takes precedenceover an engagement with the lived reality of community and individual experiences.

But anti-colonial nationalism has always been marked by internal contradictions, and postcolonial nations were and still remains, in the words of Szeman, "zones of instability" (the title of her book). This is evident even in the early nationalistic texts like those of Anand and Rao. Peter Morey says that, even though idealistic about the "nation-in-the-making", "As national allegories in Jamesonian terms, Mulk Raj Anand's and Raja Rao's texts make certain strategically necessary elisions. The myth of national unity is confronted by India's polymorphous, polyglot reality". As such, both in Kanthapura and Untouchable the attempts "to imagine the nation as a unit are constantly hindered by the intrusion of India as she is, stratified and segregated by caste and community, rather than as the nationalist project would wish her to be".[40]

Thus the concept of nationalism is a bit perplexing especially in the case of India, which is a symbol of variegated colours, diverse regions and cultures. The theories of nation and nationalism fail to some extent when applied to India. Deep-seated communal antipathy fostered by British imperialism, frequent regional and communal clashes and differences of history, language and culture in different regions have kept the denizens divided. The question then arises as to what type of nation is India, when its basic constituents are relentlessly struggling against each other. The failure to efface the past on the parts of the Indians is still at best demonstrated in its political affairs where "present politics are shaped by conceptions of the past". From the earliest stage of its career, representation of the nation in Indian English writings has always been "predicated on the simultaneous exposure and emasculation of religious, cultural and ethnic differences".[41]

The years since 1947, when India led the way for other colonial states into post-colonial independence, has been marked by the simultaneous deferral of pre-independence nationalist utopias. This is a case not unique to India alone. The sense of "anticlimactic betrayal of the promise of freedom in decolonization" and the consequent subordination of the nation-people "to particularistic state imperatives" has been experienced by most of the decolonized nations, and a great deal has been written about it.[42]

In her book Zones of Instability: Literature, Postcolonialism, and the Nation, Imre Szeman argues that the birth of the postcolonial nation was a historical necessity, and while its relation to modernity was equally inevitable, the process of definition began rather than ended at that moment. Independence and the transfer of power to the new "nation" were at best a compromise, and no sooner was that achieved than cracks and fissures began to appear everywhere.[43] In spite of his defense of nationalsim in his book Imagined Communities, Benedict Anderson highlights the "opposition between the spontaneous dynamism of resisting peoples and their institutional capture by the *techne* of reactionary class and state apparatuses".[44] He argues that in its initial emergence, the nation is a mass-based imagined political community induced by a constellation of historical forces in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such as the rise of print capitalism and a new mode of homogeneous empty time. But to this pioneering style of emancipatory popular national consciousness, he counterposes a second style of nationalism—the reactionary official nationalism deployed by European dynastic states to naturalize themselves in response to the challenges of popular nationalism. The problems of postcolonial nationalism are then explained in terms of a Janus-like modulation between good and bad, popular and statist models of nationalism adopted by each decolonizing nation after it achieves statehood.

"Often," Anderson writes, "in the 'nation-building' policies of the new [decolonized] states one sees both a genuine, popular nationalist enthusiasm and a systematic, even Machiavellian, instilling of nationalist ideology through the mass media, the educational system, administrative regulations, and so forth... One can thus think of many of these nations as projects the achievement of which is still in progress, yet projects conceived more in the spirit of Mazzini than that of Uvarov".[45] Decolonizing nationalism is thus a spontaneous project of becoming that is perverted in the aftermath of independence, when the postcolonial nation becomes possessed by the state it thinks it controls.

According to Bill Ashcroft, "The nation-state has been critiqued in post-colonial analysis largely because the post-independence, postcolonized nation, that wonderful utopian idea, proved to be a focus of exclusion and division rather than unity; perpetuating the class divisions of the colonial state rather than liberating national subjects".[46] In India also, the situation was the same. The nationalistic fervour gradually lost its sway as corruption and failures of government and its bureaucracies became overwhelming. The "nation-in-the-making" with all its pre-independence possibilities and hopes came to be challenged by a degenerated form of politics interested in the immediate electoral gains, especially after the death of Nehru in 1964. The Nehruvian secular nation-state was seriously challenged by revived communalism in the guise of Hindu nationalism (of which the lowest point was reached with the destruction of the Babri Mosque at Ayodhya in 1996). The forces of religious and communal identification were weakening the ideals of secularism enshrined in anti-colonial nationalism. Of course, the situation was no different in all the three countries that finally emerged in the sub-continent after the end of colonization. Although, as van Schendel says, liberation nationalism may have won the war of independence in the Indian subcontinent, it has failed miserably to win the peace that followed in all three countries.[47]

Another dangerous tendency that contributed to the disillusion to the nationalist narratives of the nation is the attempt of this narrative to curtail the proliferation of those voices and histories that problematize the imagining of a homogenous nation. In the name of unity and solid marker of the nation, certain class, cultural and gender identities are taken to be representative of some essential Indianness, and made to stand for the whole nation, and those outside such an imaginary risk marginalization and, in extreme cases, victimization. This exclusive narrative of the nation came to be challenged by a more inclusive one since the 1980s, with both historiography and fiction trying to represent the fragmentary vision of the nation. Both historiography and imaginative writings were mourning the loss of the secular ideals and degeneration in the democratic structures of the nation under those forces which were threatening its plural, polyglot, identity. This mourning also activated the stimulus for the search for alternatives appropriate for a country like India, and the result was this fragmentary vision. Gyanendra Pandey eloquently speaks about this "fragmentary" point of view in revisionist historiography and its importance in resisting the drive for homogenisation.[48] Adopting this fragmentary point of view involves excavating and recuperating previously unheard or

suppressed voices and histories of people and communities, and providing them political and discursive space in the narratives of the nation. In the previous chapter, we have seen how the writers are doing it as far as history is concerned.

The biggest blow to the social-democratic ideals of the nation came in the guise of the Emergency imposed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975. This was undoubtedly the lowest point in the history of postcolonial India. This state of Emergency, which was declared by Mrs. Gandhi solely to protect her political position, resulted in the mass arrest of opposition leaders, the cancellation of elections, a ban on strikes and the suspension of press freedom. It led to brutal violations of human rights which culminated in the infamous policies of indiscriminate slum-clearance and enforced sterilization. Thousands were detained without trial and a series of totally illegal and unwarranted actions followed involving untold human misery and suffering. This nightmarish period in Indian history has been the focus of many novels written in the 1980s and 90s.

All this undesirable and degrading happenings caused in the minds of the national intelligentsia a general sense of disenchantment with the lofty idealism of the anti-colonial moment and disillusionment about the nation's political destiny. At this historical juncture, for the Indian English writer, the imaginative possibilities for the construction of a homogenous national community were rather meagre. Instead an engagement with the socio-political travails of the young nation as well as a re-evaluation of the failing ideals of nationalism appeared to be the more desirable alternative.

It is in this scenario that writers like Rushdie, Sealy, Tharoor, Kesavan, Mistry, Chandra and others emerged. It is during this volatile historical period that the anxiety of nationalism and the idea of a solid, homogeneous nation came to be subjected to scrutiny and rejection by some IE writers. The 1980s witnessed a boom in what Priya Joshi terms as "nationsroman".[49] While Midnight's Children remain the seminal work of the national allegory, there have been several novels since then which evince, to various degrees, an interest in the idea and the structure of the national narrative—significant among them are I. Allan Sealy's The Trotter-Nama, Shashi Tharoor's The Great Indian Novel, Vikram Chandra's Red Earth, Pouring Rain, and Mukul Kesavan's Looking through Glass. Joshi, however, points out that

> ...the most striking feature of this wave of 'nationsroman' is exactly how *un*nationalistic they are. Unlike Bankim's unmistakable albeit contradictory nationalism or Tagore's more probing version of almost a century later, the English novelists of the 1980s seem more elegiac over than celebratory of the nation. These are national novels, yes; but hardly national*ist* ones.[50] (Italics in original)

The *unnationalistic* stance of the writings of the last two decades reflect the suspicion and at times, outright disavowal of nationalism because of its exclusivist, hegemonic, statist, bourgeois nature. It is the alliance with a statist version of nationalism that has made it hard for Indian English writers of the earlier generations to engage with the "present" of the nation's history.In the Indian subcontinent, nationalism indeed emerged as a progressive force that voiced the interests and aspirations of the whole nation, cutting across all social boundaries, by identifying the common enemy—British imperialism. However, after political independence, because of the nature and composition of its national bourgeoisie, nationalism in India increasingly started acquiring an exclusive elitist character.

In the conclusion of Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World, Partha Chatterjee rejects cultural nationalism as a discourse that inevitably ends up as a statist ideology. He argues that in the Third World, anticolonial cultural nationalism is the ideological discourse used by a rising but weak indigenous bourgeoisie to co-opt the popular masses into its struggle to wrest hegemony from the colonial regime, even as it keeps the masses out of direct participation in the governance of the postcolonial state.

Frantz Fanon, writing in the context of the Algerian liberation struggle in the late 1950's and early 1960's, identifies common pitfalls of the cosmopolitan intellectual/artist searching for a unified and consolidated sense of national culture. A national culture, with its immense plurality and complexity, however, offers no simplified and unitary translation that the intellectual desires. Fanon's famous dictum, "culture abhors simplification" is directed against this cosmopolitan intellectual or artist, who in his desire (anxiety) to identify with his people, ends up instead producing a narrative of exoticism:

When at the height of his intercourse with his people, whatever they were or whatever they are, the intellectual decides to come down into the common paths of real life, he only brings back from his adventuring, formulas which are sterile in the extreme. He sets a high value on the customs, traditions and the appearances of his people; but his inevitable painful experience only seems to be a banal search for exoticism... The culture that the intellectual leans towards is often no more than a stock of particularisms... Culture has never the translucidity of customs; it abhors all simplification.[51]

Fanon's caustic but astute characterization of the cosmopolitan intellectual's misguided sense of national culture is deeply relevant to static, nationalistic depiction of "Indianness" in the writings of Rao, Anand and Narayan. As discussed earlier, this body of literature, in its deep anxiety to be nationalistic, ends up projecting certain static cultural symbols as *the* national culture.

In a dialogic move that synthesizes the demands of both nation and culture, he contends that it is the myriad practices of a people, in its constant struggle to define itself amidst chaos and instability, that we have the emergence of a "national culture". It is this Fanonesque sense of national consciousness that foreground the many voices in which the nation speaks—voices appropriated and marginalized within the discourse of nationalism—that has been prominently missing in Indian English writings until the 1980's.

During a period when the very idea of the nation was undermined by internal fissures, conflicts and contradictions, and the legitimacy of nationalism was in crisis, the novel in India has had, according to Kavila Matthai:

To confront an authoritarian state-sponsored version of national identity and the erosion of the idealism that had accompanied nationalism... In a situation where the official version is the only one, purporting to be the authentic version as well, the role of literature becomes crucial in releasing alternative version.[52]

The alternative picture of India projected by the writers of the Rushdie generation is one which is different from the one projected by nationalist metanarrative. The picture that comes out

is ironic, subversive, fragmentary, riddled with cracks and fissures and fast disintegrating like Saleem's body; it is an India which is unruly and beyond simplistic categorization like the unruly, hybrid bodies in Sealy's novel; it is an India that is made up not of one single piece but of numerous fragments like the shards of memories and strands of stories in the novels of Ghosh, Deb, Sealy; an India which is plural and heteroglot, which is uncontainable and constantly evolving like the unending, ever-expanding stories in Red Earth and Pouring Rain and The Great Indian Novel and Midnight's Children. Finally, the image of India in that these writers paint is not celebratory but elegiac; it is a nation that has squandered its potential and possibilities, sometimes wantonly and sometimes accidentally.

Pranav Jani, in his recent book Decentering Rushdie (2010), asserts the now acknowledged fact that the shift of focus from nation-building to nation-mourning in Indian English novels occurs in the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's Emergency in 1975. He calls those novels written in the early decades of independence "*namak-halal cosmopolitan novels*". These novels, according to him "associate themselves with the national projcct, however critically" and "often exhibited and encouraged in their audiences what i call '*namak-halaal* cosmopolitanism,' a cosmopolitanism that remained 'true to its salt' in that it was oriented toward and committed to the nation as a potentially emancipatory space".[53] He writes how the intellectual environment and cultural and political radicalism of those decades from the 1930 to the 60s sustained this *namak-halal* cosmopolitanism in the writings. He goes on to distinguish these novels from the postnational novels that emerged in the 1980s:

> It is only after the Emergency and the crackdown on democracy and popular struggle conducted by Nehru's daughter, under the aegis of "secularism" and "socialism" no less, that we see English-novelists look away from the nation as a potential site for fulfilling the promises of decolonization. The ongoing inequalities in postcolonial India since then, brought about by the neoliberal strategies of development, communalist politics, and heightened militarism that were engendered in the early 1980s, have only served to deepen the postnational turn among Indian novelists working in English.[54]

While discussing the representation of the nation by these writers, this chapter is structured around three distinct thematic concerns common to these texts. In the preceding section, we have outlined the relationship between nationalism and Indian English writing as well as the socio-political scenario of India which brought about a deep sense of disillusionment among the intelligentsia as well the common people in recent times. As products of a particular historical time when the democratic ethos of the country was under tremendous strain, these novels depict the sense of disenchantment, its causes, and question the very validity or legitimacy of the concept of the nation-state. In the next section that follows we shall examine how these texts questions the legitimacy and validity of the postcolonial nation-state and nationalism, and how they equate this illegitimacy of the nation-state as a derivative discourse. The legacy of colonialism and imperialism was continued by the postcolonial elite, and it was the cause of consequent failure of the nation-state in delivering the promise of freedom and liberty. The novels on the Partition makes it abundantly clear that the very claim of the nationalist narrative of a unified, legitimate nation-state collapsed in the face of communal violence, bloodshed which accompanied the arbitrary and divisive cartographic politics. The Partition, the very moment of the birth of the nation, destroyed one of the most revered foundations of the nation: that is, the idea of a stable community, the feeling of shared heritage and belonging—all of which were destroyed by the arbitrarily created boundaries. Secondly, we shall look at the theme of failure and betrayal of the postcolonial nation-state in the texts. With illustrations from the texts, the following sections show how these writers go on charting the failure of the nation and lament the rotting away of all the promises and expectations of a nascent republic betrayed by the ruling elites. Finally, an attempt has been made to see these texts as counter-narratives to the national narratives in that they imagine a different India—where the margins of the nation are given space of "enunciation", and consequently they counter the ideas of authenticity, purity of national identity inherent in nationalist construction of India, and present a polyglot, hybrid India, a truer India.

III.

In an essay entitled "The Riddle of Midnight: India; August 1987", written to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of Indian independence, Rushdie asked, "Does India exist?" and then went on to answer this question himself:

> It's when you start thinking about the political entity, the nation of India, the thing whose fortieth anniversary it is, that the question starts making sense. After all, in all the thousands of years of Indian history, there never was such a creature as a united India. Nobody ever managed to rule the whole place, not the Mughals, not the British. And then, that midnight, the thing that had never existed was suddenly 'free'. But what on earth was it? On what common ground (if any) did it, does it, stand?[55]

All through his writing career, Rushdie has written about India both in his fictions and his non-fictions. India remains for him the prime concern and focus.[56] The idea of India as it transpires in Midnight's Children is completely different from what was trumpeted to be at the moment of its birth. It is an India riddled with many maladies and tottering towards disintegration. The erosion of the secular, public sphere, the troubled legacies of colonialism, the rise of internal dissents regarding religion, language, history, the rise of Mrs. Gandhi and the sense of betrayal of all the utopian dreams and possibilities of nationalism—all of these have been charted by Rushdie in the novel.

Midnight's Children is the offspring of a period in Indian history when the idea of the nation was in deep crisis. Revisionist historiography as practised by the Subaltern Studies group were interrogating Indian nationalism and and the role of the nationalist elite. This crisis of the concept of nation was further aggravated by the dictatorial excesses under the rule of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Subaltern Studies were conceived in the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's dictatorial Emergency rule of 1975–77, and Rushdie was also writing his novel under the dark shadows of the Emergency. In an Interview with John Haffenden, Rushdie said: "The book was conceived and begun during the Emergency, and I was very angry about that. The stain of it is on the book. The Emergency and the Bangladesh war were the two most terrible events since

Independence, and they had to be treated as the outrageous crimes that they were".[57] The novel exposes the falsity and irrelevance of the nationalist myth of a secular, all inclusive nation; it charts the failures of the postcolonial nation-state in its promises and looks for new metaphors of nationhood. In its own fantastic ways, Midnight's Children reveals the constructedness, mythic, and provisional nature of the nation and history. Finally, equating the fate of the nation with that of the protagonist Saleem, Rushdie attempts to write his own version of the history of the nation, which is plural, hybrid, and heteroglossic.

Saleem, born at the instance of India's independence from Britain, becomes inextricably linked with the political, national, and religious events of his time. Rushdie is relating Saleem's generation of "midnight's children" to the generation of Indians with whom he was born and raised. Saleem realizes that as a product of postcolonial India, his identity is fragmented and multifarious in nature; and his story represents the plural identities of India and the fragmented search for self through memory. J. M. Kane says:

> Saleem is the new nation. He is consequently a "swallower of lives" in many senses (11): as the admittedly tendentious fabulist; as the exemplar of a grotesquely ill family; as the multivocal, diversely bodied Indian state; and as an alternate, magical ruler of the nation and its mocking, victimized populace. These levels of significance merge in Rushdie's allegorical history of twentieth-century India.[58]

Kane also finds Rushdie to use the figure of Saleem to produce a critique of "the nationalist conception of the new country as an essential totality"; however, Kane reads the "allegorization of history" through the metaphor of Saleem's body rather than his role as a failed epic hero.[59] Saleem acts as the vehicle of Indian nationality, but his genesis—his mixed parentage and multiple genealogies— makes a mockery of the unitary, coherent idea of postcolonial Indian nationalism, and it debunks conceptions of blood and race as the unifying constituents of national identity.[60]

Saleem ironically turns out to be an Anglo-Indian, the illegitimate son of a devious colonizer and a poor Hindu woman, Vanita. Hence, it can be said that if Aadam Aziz (Saleem's grandfather) embodies the established narrative of Indian History, then this alternative genealogy

expresses dissatisfaction with national history and a rejection of the Indian nation state itself as the bastard product of England's violation of the subcontinent. In other words, Rushdie seems to be arguing that the new state that cameinto being on 15 August 1947 was Indian in its colour, composition and make-up, but its pedigree was unmistakably British. As a recent critic, Nandini Bhattacharya has pointed out:

> In the figure of Saleem (whom Nehru calls the mirror of the nation), Rushdie also attacks the concept of the nation as a pure, essential and unchanging space, comprising of a group of homogenous people moving towards a common destiny. As a 'monster' born of triple mothers—the Hindu Vanita, the Muslim Amina and the Christian Mary—and three fathers—the departing colonialist Methwold, the street musician Wee Willie Winkie and businessman Ahmed Sinai—Saleem represents the new-born nation in all its heterogeneity, and bewildering plurality.[61]

Regarding national culture, Fanon focuses on the effects of the hegemonic devices used by the colonizers to obliterate the culture of the colonized and the resulting desire of the colonized to unite under a homogenous national identity and culture.A national culture is predicated upon the assumption and expectation thatthe inhabitants of the colonized country must "authentically" represent their native culture.[62] But Rushdie resists such assumptions and is against being pigeonholed to one particular culture. According to him, authenticity is "the respectable child of old-fashioned exoticism" which "demands that sources, forms, style, language and symbol all derive from a supposedly homogenous and unbroken tradition".[63] Therefore he makes Saleem a bastard, hybrid child with inauthentic lineage, thereby mocking at one of the most scared myth of nationalist construction of nationhood.

In The Great Indian Novel Shashi Tharoor also emphasizes the hybrid character of modern India. At the same time, he mediates this picture of the postcolonial nation through allusions and intertextual interactions of colonial texts and Indian oral narratives. Tharoor's method is explained by Ralph J. Crane:

> His view, which dependson the acceptance of a shared commonwealth, particularly ashared commonwealth of literature and language, offers amore

inclusive way of mediating India, one that embraces andindigenises the conventions of Raj fiction while refusing to beconfined by a too rigid interpretation of indigeneity.[64]

Tharoor discards the idea of an unbroken, authentic tradition, and in place of it, he insists on a shared British-Indian history. His allusions imply that modern India has emerged from a variety of contexts including arecent colonial or British Indian one, rather than from any pure indigenous context. Tharoor explains, "My allusions are not only to Indian myths, ancient and modern. I have tried, both in the chapter headings and in stray referencesthroughout the text, to take account of other fictional attempts todepict the Indo-British encounter".[65] The title of the second book, "The Duel With the Crown", for example, is a pun on the title ofthe first volume of Paul Scott's Raj Quartet, The Jewel in the Crown, which recalls India's colonial relationship with theBritish Crown, while simultaneously suggesting that Scott's presentation of that relationship will be problematized byTharoor's response to it. Amongst other things, then, this novel reminds us of the need to "re-examine all received wisdom about India"[66], British or Indian. As Gayatri Spivak says, an all-inclusive historical perspective must take into account the reality of the colonial connections of postcolonial India, even though such a perspective goes against what "indigenous theory" maintains.[67]

The mixed historical parentage of modern India is represented in the person of Draupadi, has a mixed parentage: she is the product of the unholy union between Nehru and Edwina, the union of the decolonizing state and the empire. Draupadi, like Saleem in Rushdie's Midnight's Children, is an embodiment of India in its hybrid character. While Saleem carries the multitude within him and is a "swallower of lives", Draupadi is a "boundless spirit" which cannot be contained: "But to tie that boundless spirit to any one man—it would be a crime; it would diminish and confine her, and all of us" (TGIN 311). So, though Draupadi is won by Arjun, she is shared by the five Pandavas who personify "the hopes and limitations of each of the national institutions they served" (TGIN 319).

Both Rushdie and Tharoor's allegorical presentation of India as an illegitimate child of British colonialism and anti-colonial nationalism brings into focus an issue that is of crucial significance in postcolonial context—the issue of legitimacy and derivativeness of postcolonial nationalism—an issue that finds its way into the literary realm. The Indian sub-continent is the

crucial site of postcolonial nation-building, asthe successor state struggles with building the nation that can give it legitimacy. Political independence meant that the successor state not only inhèrited a vast geographical space under its direct or indirect rule, but also political institutions—courts, parliaments, police, civil service, modern military formations—that continue to maintain state authority. Although theseinstitutions were inevitably changed by their translation from a metropolitanpower to its colonies, and further by the abuses of power and the pressures ofindigenous politics in the successor states, their continuance serves to providea model of legitimacy and thus to tie postcolonial reality to European modesof thought.

Nationalism was a potent force in providing the energy in anti-colonial national agitation. Anti-colonial nationalism, in the words of Benita Parry, "did challenge, subvert and undermine the ruling ideologies, and nowhere more so than in overthrowing the hierarchy of coloniser/colonised, the speech and stance of the colonised refusing a position of subjugation and dispensing with the terms of the coloniser's definitions".[68] But, it starts losing its force when it becomes a mere political weapon in the hands of the postcolonial ruling elites who uses, or rather abuses, it to maintain power and narrow self-serving agendas. In the postcolonial scenario, it is often seen that the dynamism of anticolonial, popular and mass-based nationalism is becomes elite and exclusive by its "institutional capture by the*techne* of reactionary class and state apparatuses" of the decolonizing nation once it achieves statehood.[69] Therefore, the very question of political legitimacy of the idea of the nation and nationalism is brought to the fore nowadays, and postcolonial writing is marked by this insistent interrogation.

Postcolonial theorists and thinkers have come to acknowledge that there is a "paradox at the heart of anticolonial nationalism".[70] Because of its European, colonial genesis, nation-ness or nationalism tends to lose their creative potential when practised by postcolonial societies. Nineteenth century nationalism and imperialism was the two sides of the same coin, and this nationalism was predicated upon a relationship of antagonism and rivalry between the ruling elite in competitive European nation-states. Anderson calls the birth of "official nationalism"—an enterprise which combined dynasticism and nation-ness to expand or stretch "the short, tight skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire".[71] Anderson calls all subsequent nationalisms as pirated versions of the original "at best, surreptitious and vaguely unlawful enterprises posing or masquerading as the real thing".[72]

Partha Chatterjee finds that the imagining of nation-ness or the project of nation-making in colonies like India is vitiated by the anxieties of imitativeness. In this regard, Indian nationalism is just a poor copy or derivation of European post-Enlightenment discourse. He calls nationalism a "derivative discourse", "a different discourse, yet one that is dominated by another".[73] Chatterjee points out the symbiosis of nationalism and imperialism and says that the former is just a copy of an oppressive structure.[74]

The dilemmas of revolutionary nationalism as highlighted by Anderson and Chatterjee are further discussed by Ania Loomba who has argued, from a gender perspective, that anticolonial nationalism also perpetuated colonial perspectives and practices of gender relations.[75] Nationalism, necessary to the struggle against colonialism, was also a product of the latter both historically and in the ideological baggage it carried into the postcolonial period.

The issues of derivativeness of nationalism and symbiosis of anti-colonial freedom and colonialist discourse are crucial for postcolonial sites like India. It is argued by scholars like Chatterjee that the moment Indian nationalism embarked on a project of indigenous self-modernisation, it announced its suicidal compromise with the colonial order:

> It thus produced a discourse in which, even as it challenged the colonial claim to political domination, it also accepted the very intellectual premises of 'modernity' on which colonial domination was based.[76]

Indian nationalism simply followed a discourse whose "meanings are fixed by the lexical and grammatical system provided by...the theoretical framework of post-Enlightenment rational thought".[77] Thus the fault lines of Indian nationalism emerged at the very moment of its conception. Rushdie and Tharoor expose this derivative nature of the very foundation of Indian nation-state.

This theme of derivativeness of the idea of nationalism and its subsequent development as spoken of by Partha Chatterjee is taken up by many of the novelists of the postcolonial era. The derivativeness of this discourse and its oppressiveness are exposed by Rushdie and Ghosh in their novels. The continuation of the colonial legacy in state affairs of the newly independent state and the capture of power by an elite section, which puts a big question mark in the legitimacy of postcolonial nation-state, is shown by Rushdie in Midnight's Children symbolically in the

transfer of the Methwold estate. In the novel, William Methwold is an Englishman who reluctantly prepares to sell his estate in Bombay before he departs from India. He finally decides to sell it to a select group of the city's Indian elite. He explains to Ahmed: "My notion is to stage my own transfer of assets...Select suitable persons...hand everything over absolutely intact: in tiptop working order" (MC 97). These "suitable persons" are Ahmed Sinai, Saleem's father, a representative of the world of business; Homi Catrack, film-magnate and racehorse-owner, a representative of the world of entertainment; Ibrahim Ibrahim, one of the 'idle rich'; Dubash, the physicist, a representative of the world of science and technology; Dr. Narlikar a representative of the professional classes; and Commander Sabarmati, a high-flyer in the navy, a representative of the armed forces.

He sells his Estate, consisting of four identical houses named after palaces in Europe, on two conditions: that the houses be bought with the entire contents which were to be retained by the new owners; and that the actual transfer takes place at midnight on 15 August 1947, the moment of Independence for India. The transfer of assets at Methwold's estate is thus both a metaphor for and a parody of the political transfer of power that was happening in India at the time. Goonetilleke says:

> ... [Methwold] is only attempting to control India through imposing Western patterns of culture—and, consequently, behaviour—on the power elite of post-Independence India. Actually, the subtext has it that power has been transferred to those already inclined towards the West, the Anglicized Indians.[78]

As discussed before, the question of legitimacy and authenticity of the nation-state is put to question by Rushdie and Tharoor through the ways in which the nation is shown to be born of illegitimate or mixed parentage. This highlights the fact that has been argued by various postcolonial critics who speak of the derivativeness of postcolonial nation-state or its complicity with colonial legacy and European origin. The legitimacy of the nation-state in India is further put to question because the very foundational moment, that is, the independence on the sub-continent begins in blood-bath and appalling slaughter that accompanied the partitioning of India and Pakistan. The end of British colonialism came with a terrible price. Even though this tragedy has its origins in the British policy of divide and rule, as well as in the squabbles and ambitions of

pre-independence politicians, they nevertheless cast doubt on the legitimacy of the successor governments at the very moment of their origin. Although this moment was determined by the act of renunciation of the British government, its proclamation was by local politicians whose legitimacy came jointly from their long struggle and from the institutions they inherited.

The Partition of India destroyed not merely a state and its peace, but the possibility of a postcolonial nation state that could go beyond the hierarchical relations of subjugation that had denied the colonial subjects their freedom.The unspeakable acts of violence and cruelties visited by neighbours and friends upon each other displayed the hideous face of nationalism that is based on ideas and assumptions of exclusiveness of national identity which denies the strength of diversity and complex interweavings of history. The Partition and its consequent and lingering trauma represent the failure of imagination of people who could not overcome the pitfalls of the exclusive construction of nationalism.

The utopian hopes and possibilities at the moment of the birth of the nation were stained and maimed by mass migration, misery and bloodshed. The much-awaited "tryst with destiny" had turned into a time of grief and horror as the subcontinent bled in the name of religion and nationalism. The great Urdu poet, Faiz Ahmad Faiz lamented this collapse of the utopian expectations and the pain and tragedy:

> This stained, spattered light,
> This night-bitten break of day
> This surely is not the dawn we were waiting for. ("Subh-E-Azadi") [79]

In the previous chapter, we have already discussed how Indian English Novels of the 1980s and 90s have narrativized the tragedy of Partition, and the ways in which they fill many gaps and lacunas in historiographies surrounding the holocaust of Partition. Here, we shall examine the ways in which these novels, through depicting the Partition as a motif, contest the utopian longing of nationalism and the nationalist construction and narratives of the nation by exposing the arbitrariness of the nation and national borders, tenuousness of secularism in a land steeped in the history of primordial communal passions, and the destructive, bloody edifice of the modern nation. The instability of the nationalist narrative that these partition narratives bring to the fore is symptomatic of the nation/state itself.

Amitav Ghosh's novel The Shadow Lines presents one of the most scathing attack on the concept of nationalism based on the binary structures of "us" and "them", and exposes the illegitimacy of the nation-state built up on the foundation of illusive borders and violent border creations. The novel emphatically repudiates the borders constituted by the Partition. In the course of the narrative, the narrator comes to realize that these cartographic divisions are "the shadow lines", and that they are at once a source of immense violence and an absurd illusion, especially in the reality of the Indian subcontinent. Nationalist narratives propagate the idea of national identities by insisting upon difference with what lies across the border. But Ghosh calls this "other" across the border our "mirror image".

Thus, the very attempt at constructing a fixed, pure national identity distinct from our "mirror image" is illegitimate and futile. On an allegorical level, Ghosh shows this in the novel through the partitioning of the grandmother's original home. This partition went through the house in an arbitrary manner not making architectural sense but making this absurdist claim of equality and fairness to both sides.

In the interview Ghosh says, "When [one] comes under pressure the first response is to say the problem can be solved by division...An absolutely unipolitical culture is an impossibility. It's enormously important for us to think of multiethnic states, because every state is multi-ethnic".[80] National boundaries are constructed on ideologies of difference. These ideologies create walls between communities and people, and the 'others' across the borders are frequently demonized. Such ideologies employ the energies of religious fundamentalism; instil fear and hostility in people's psyche which continues to yoke the people of the subcontinent in a relationship of negativity and inversion. The fact that people carry the partition walls in their minds, and that they continue to affect people's lives even after the real dispute is forgotten, can be seen in the predicament of the grandmother. In the second section of the novel, she faces the daunting experience of "coming home".She is shocked to find out that borders are not something tangible as she believed them to be. She hoped to see, "trenches perhaps, or soldiers, or guns pointing at each other..." In reality, realizes that the border takes the more abstract form of an airport official, who will stamp her passport. The grandmother asks the embarrassing question: "But if there aren't any trenches or anything, how are people to know? I mean, where's the difference then? And if there's no difference both sides will be the same" (TSL 151). What she cannot see, and what nationalist causes are frequently blind to, is that the "us" and "them"

demarcation is based on differences not related to nationality but religion. The real situation is one of Hindus against Muslims.

Ghosh emphasises the fact that borders are created to create nations in terms of territories, and they are supposed to create a pure, distinct nation. But this logic defeats itself because in reality borders divide people and create enduring traumas in the life of the nation. What Tridib's atlas demonstrates to the narrator, the lesson he learns after a harrowing seventeen year-long search for the truth of Tridib's death, is that in the ultimate analysis, borderlines, so sacred and important for nationalist discourse, do not mean anything at all. By highlighting the fact that even after the partition there might not be any "difference" between the two regions across the border, the novel questions the ideology of nationalism through temporal and spatial images.

As Amitav Ghosh puts it in the interview mentioned above, "Today nationalism, once conceived of as a form of freedom, is really destroying our world. It's destroying the forms of ordinary life that many people know".[81] Partition, and its corollary of polarizing violence, has become a recurring motif in the subsequent history of the subcontinent—"all those [...] dead people—in Assam, the north-east, Punjab, Sri Lanka, Tripura—people shot by terrorists and separatists and the army and the police" says Robi to the narrator in Ghosh's novel (TSL 246). It also makes "the idea of a pure, 'ethnically cleansed' national identity" all the more impossible.[82]

The nation-state prevents the development of free exchange between peoples. While commenting on Ghosh's logic of drafting the politics of space in the novel, Mukherjee makes a pertinent comment:

> Amitav Ghosh would like to believe in a world where there is nothing in between, where borders are illusions. Actually three countries get interlocked in Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines—East Pakistan before it became Bangladesh, England, and India—and people of at least three religions and nationalities impinge upon one another's lives and deaths. It is very much a text of our times when human lives spill over from one country to another, where language and loyalties cannot be contained within tidy national frontiers.[83]

The titles of two separate parts in the novel, "Going Away" and "Coming Home" point to the dilemma of space and place for the people of contemporary India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

When the narrator's grandmother tries to explain that in the past coming and going from Dhaka had never been a problem and that no one ever stopped her, the narrator as a school boy jumps at the ungrammatical expression of his grandmother and wonders why she could not make a difference between coming and going:

> Tha'mma, Tha'mma! I cried. How could you have 'come' home to Dhaka? You don't know the difference between coming and going! (TSL 152).

At this juncture, the narrator tries to share with the reader a deep rooted confusion and chaos in the psyche of partition victims that face an era of barbed wires and checkpoints on their old territory. The narrator infers:

> Every language assumes a centrality, a fixed and settled point to go away from and come back to, and what my grandmother was looking for was a journey which was not a coming and a going at all; a journey that was a search for precisely that fixed point which permits the proper use of verbs of movement. (TSL 153)

The narrator is, at the same time, particularly concerned with the predicament of dogmatic Indian nationalists who are obsessed with drawing lines and shutting doors on each other when in history they were all one people. "Going away" and "Coming home" in the past was something one could achieve without risking one's life in the subcontinent; for Dhaka or Calcutta were places to enter without showing any passports or identity card. Ghosh states:

> the simple fact that there had never been a moment in the four-thousand-year-old history of that map, where the places we know as Dhaka and Calcutta were more closely bound to each other than after they had drawn their lines—so closely that I, in Calcutta, had only to look into the mirror to be in Dhaka; a moment when each city was the invented image of the other, locked into an irreversible symmetry by the line that was to set us free—our looking-glass border. (TSL 233)

Like The Shadow Lines, Deb's novel The Point of Return also exposes the arbitrariness of borders and boundaries in the construction of nation and their imposed ideology for the sake of nationalism which marginalizes those people who problematize the imagining of a homogenous, solid nation. In the novel Deb reveals "....the manner in which a nation formed on a makeshift operating table can continue to redefine itself through the enforcement of fresh boundaries, internal as well as external".[84] Deb's novel has a lot of similarities with The Shadow Lines. Deb's novel recalls Ghosh's The Shadow Linesin its examination of migration and borders, as well as in its dealing with the split personality of Bengalis torn apart by partition.

Dr. Dam, whose parents came to India during the Partition of 1947, is a government servant in the veterinary department groomed by the nationalism of the Indian freedom struggle and the legacy of the British colonial rule. Babu's grandparents and father were the lucky ones who escaped the terrible cataclysm by fleeing to undivided Assam. For the grandparents, these geopolitical shifts meant nothing much as it did for Dr. Dam and his son Babu in the later years:

> The burden of the partition, of finding a new way of life in the country that had been fashioned so bloodily in 1947, he had left to his eldest son, my father. My grandfather's references to the home left behind as East Pakistan, decades after East Pakistan had seceded from Pakistan to become the independent nation-state of Bangladesh, revealed something more that a limited grasp of geopolitical shifts. It showed that the landscape of his past would for ever be permanent and unchanging, not something that was historical and therefore open to perpetual revision but a place beyond the vagaries of time. (TPOR 26)

But Dr. Dam was well aware of these shifts, when during a night in 1971, alone in a bungalow, he read the news of the war of Bangladesh: "....he had become emotional at the thought of a war machine moving towards a land that for all the liberation to come would never again be home....those place names that had been left behind the border of '47.... Irrevocably gone, like the matriculation certificate he never claimed because he did not have the required fee?" (TPOR 110-111).

Speaking of how nations and communities represent and refigure themselves in the aftermath of an exemplary moment of violence, Gyanendra Pandey remarks:

> Nations and communities that would be nations seems to deal with the moment of violence….:by the relatively simple stratagem of drawing a neat boundary around themselves, distinguishing sharply between 'us' and 'them', and pronouncing the act of violence an act of the other or an act necessitated by a threat to the self.[85]

Borders of the nation were created to make a sharp distinction between the "outsiders" from the "insiders". This paranoia and the resultant violence and upheaval in the lives of people are depicted by both Ghosh and Deb to show the illegitimacy of national borders.

In The Shadow Lines, Ghosh suggests that the antagonistic, separatist construction of national boundaries epitomized by Partition forecloses syncretic possibilities for national and cultural identity formation by instilling fear in the national consciousness. When Muslims poisoned the water of Calcutta in 1964 as a protest against the communal crisis in Dhaka as rumoured by the word-of-mouth, the narrator felt at that time that "our city had turned against us" (TSL 203). Out of terror of riots, he could not even trust his Muslim friend Montu.Priya Kumar, in her discussion of the novel as a trauma narrative says that "Ghosh endorses his belief in a collective subcontinental subjectivity".[86] It is a subjectivity that lives under an overwhelming fear of the "other". As two cities in two different countries flare up in communal tensions, the narrator gets a glimpse into this fear. He remembers fear suddenly filling the familiar space of his native city:

> It is a fear that comes of the knowledge that normalcy is utterly contingent, that the spaces that surround one, the streets that one inhabits, can become, suddenly and without warning, as hostile as a desert in a flash flood. It is this that sets apart the thousand million people who inhabit the subcontinent from the rest of the world—not language, not food, not music—it is the special quality of loneliness that grows out of the fear of the war between oneself and one's image in the mirror. (TSL 204)

The fear of the "other" which makes the nation create boundaries resulting in violence and bloodshed is something that haunts the nation. But like the boundaries themselves this fear is illusive, as all people are same; what one fears is the image of oneself.

The fact that paranoia was very much a part of the India he served so eagerly was first realized by Dr. Dam in Deb's novel when the two Danish professors who had come to the town to inspect the Indo—Danish Dairy Project, were suspected of being spies. Later, during the time of turbulence in the hills he once again realized that "...the nation he imagined being shored up through the efforts of people like him was ultimately a fortress, that everywhere around him new battle lines were being drawn and fresh groups of people were being defined as outsiders, borders bristling with barbed-wire teeth" (TPOR 221).

One of the paramount characteristics of the ideology of nationalism is that it defines itself in opposition to other countries across the border.[87] Ghosh deplores the division of the subcontinent by challenging and contesting the myth of nationalism on the Indian subcontinent, which has erected walls among heterogeneous ethnicities in the false garb of freedom and liberty. When Tridib's brother Robi recollects Tridib's death in Dhaka in a Bangladeshi restaurant in England, fifteen years later, he expresses bitterly the cynicism towards the new nation states which is seminal to Ghosh's view of the present-day subcontinent:

> And then I think to myself, why don't they draw thousands of little lines through the whole subcontinent and give every little place a new name? What would it change? It's a mirage; the whole thing is a mirage. How can anyone divide memory? If freedom was possible, surely Tridib's death would have set me free.(TSL 247)

In Deb's novel The Point of Return, the narrator Babu also experiences this divisive logic of nationalism and national boundaries. Babu for whom the town was the only home he ever knew could not understand how people are suddenly divided between "us" and "them", how in the very town they came to be called "Dkhar"—foreign dogs: "What this meant was that by some undefined process, the 'we' became composed exclusively of non-tribals, and the tribals who had been part of my life since the age of six faded away, joining groups of their own" (TPOR 177). The tribals wanted them to go back calling them Bangladeshis. But where could they possibly

go? For "What had been left behind could not even be given a name" (TPOR 178) as new boundaries and new nations emerged where once "home" was. Deb, in this way, like Ghosh in The Shadow Lines, speaks about the legacy of partition and the continued trauma of its violence and rupture.

Official narrative of the nation-formation seeks to exclude difference and otherness. In the case of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent, we can see how nation-formation was accomplished through the Partition which illustrated the failure of the national wish to "livewith differences". On the role played by Partition in the national imagining of India, the historian Sunil Khilnani observes:

> Partition is the unspeakable sadness at the heart of the idea of India: a [reminder] that what made India possible also profoundly diminished the integral value of the idea [...and...] the conviction that what defined India was its extraordinarycapacity to accumulate and live with differences.[88]

Khilnani argues that Indian nationalism sought to emphasize unity, but the nationalist logic of exclusion, the Partition, and the resultant violence and its continuing trauma prompt a questioning of dominant paradigms for the construction and representation of difference in national and cultural contexts. The violent and continuing implications to thisday of Partition as the foundational act of nation formation, foregrounded in The ShadowLines, What the Body Remembers and Looking Through Glass exists as a motif in many partition narratives. The destructive energies of religious fundamentalism which destroyed the utopia of a newly born nation at the very moment of its birth have been highlighted by these partition narratives.

The violence of partition separates the successor states not only from their imperial past, but also from the same precolonial traditions that gave legitimacy to the independence movement. In What the Body Remembers, these costs of Partition are not simply chronicled in the narrative, but are dramatised as both individual and communal loss. In the words of Bella Stander, "Beyond being a compelling tale of individuals, What the Body Remembers offers a gimlet-eyed view of a pluralistic society's disintegration into factionalism and anarchy. Though the events of 1947 India are a half-world and half-century away, in light of the religious and ethnic turmoil raging on Earth, they still have much to teach us".[89]

One of the most terrible legacies that still haunt the subcontinent, and which poses the biggest obstacle in imagining the nation in its fullness, is the culmination of communal hatred between people—Hindu vs. Muslim and vice versa or Muslims vs. Sikhs. Conflicts and divisions between these religious factions were there even during pre-partition times. But "the terms used to articulate conflicts betweenthese groups in this era were significantly altered by the antagonistic, binary, rationale underlying Partition and acquired a violent, hostile intensity".[90] To highlight this significant point, Gabriel cites elaborately from Sudhir Kakar's book The Colours of Violence: CulturalIdentities, Religion and Conflict (1996) where he writes that in pre-colonial India, conflicts between Hindusand Muslims tended to be of a "religious" rather than a "communal" nature.

Kakar asserts that while religion is "a matter ofpersonal faith and reverence for a particular set of icons, rituals, and dogmas", but communalism not only produces identification witha religious community but, more significantly, the notion that the community's political,economic, social and cultural interests diverge from and conflict with those of other communities.[91] Kakar delves deep into the communal nature of Partition violence which reinforced overarching identities such as "Muslim" and "Hindu". Subsequently, these became highly charged terms; eventoday, the nationalist rhetoric in both India and Pakistan continues to range Muslims against Hindus, by playing them off as each other's *other*.

The communally charged discourse produced by the colonials, and derived and adopted by the nationalists during the time of the Partition, and its long-term consequences in the postcolonial nation have been exposed by Mukul Kesavan in his novel Looking Through Glass. Though he does not refer to the actual violence and scenes of bloodshed like Baldwin (or like Sidhwa), we get to know it from the contemporary frame of reference of the narrator. Masroor, who from the very beginning was suspicious of the divisive political rhetoric, produced a jigsaw puzzle for planting doubt among people regarding the communal logic of the inevitable Partition. The jigsaw contained the map of undivided India:

> His maps were drawn to scale and they showed the political boundaries of India as they were—before Partition, the death of the princely states and the birth of linguistic provinces changed the shape of the country. Before, that is, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Gujarat and

> Orissa had happened... This was a map where a letter to Hyderabad could be delivered in Sind. It showed each one of the innumerable political units that made up India then: the kingdoms large and small, the huge presidencies and provinces of British India, the tiny remains of miscarried empires: Goa, Pondicherry, Chandernagore... (LTG 228-229).

Masroor's map serves as a metaphor of mapping territories. It symbolizes angst and harrowing of sensitive Indians who were disturbed by the idea of dividing the country. The rules of the game as fixed by Masroor subtly reveal the consequent holocaust and continued fracture and repeated border problems in the subcontinent because all these rules were disregarded by those who planned and executed the Partition in such a arbitrary manner:

> (1) This is a difficult jigsaw so do not hurry or you might mislay a piece and never complete it. (2) The projections on each piece that slot into the corresponding cut-outs on others are liable to tear because the paper is stiff and brittle. So handle with care or parts of the map will stay detached. (3) The game can be played by more than one player. You can ask another person to help you put the map together (LTG 229).

The instruction emphasizes the complexity of the issue of the Partition. It was the destiny of millions of people who were to be rendered homeless, uprooted or mutilated, physically and mentally. It also alludes to the failure of the leaders to deliver the freedom and sense of home to millions. The partition meant an abrupt end to a long, communally shared history and cultural heritage, peaceful co-existence and extended feelings of fraternity. Nila Shah says, "Kesavan's narrative, by pointing towards the stark reality of the time, catechizes the concept of India and articulates traumatic condition of silenced voices".[92]

The loss of community, intensity of communal hatred and the fury of religious cleansing during the Partition are represented in Partition texts like What the Body Remembers, Looking Through Glass as well as earlier texts like Singh's Train to Pakistan and Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy Man. The communal fury and violence overrode an ancient history and set both successor states apart from the possibility of the modern nationhood that, in their different ways, they

aspired to then and have pursued since. In reading Partition fictions we need to keep this fact in mind.

That the newly created nation could not solve many problems, and that borders and boundaries, thought to be giving solidity to the concept of home, actually destroyed the possibility of finding a home in the map of the nation for many people, are themes that are explored by partition narratives like The Shadow Lines and The Point of Return, as by earlier partition fictions like Train to Pakistan by Kushwant Singh. Novels like these displace the concept of 'the nation as home' thereby provincialising the universality of the nation as ideal community. The Partition had divided individuals along religious and national lines. The India that might have been is destroyed by its own violence. The personal and public elements of communal hatred and immense loss of human lives as depicted in these Partition novels are testimony to the fact the promised long-cherished birth of the nation brought only rupture, and that the promise of a nation was shattered, betrayed and wasted. All that is left is cracks, deaths, for these writers to lament.

While the partition shattered the dream of a secular, peaceful state, the consequent growth of the nation brought in further disappointments and discontents in the national life. There was a perceptible decay of political ethos which was aggravated by rampant corruption and weakness of the later politicians. By the 1970s, this feeling of discontent and disillusionment reached its peak. It was felt that the promise of Independence and participatory, secular, democratic, welfare governance was betrayed by the postcolonial elite who inherited power from the Raj. Sinister growth of regional conflicts and religious intolerance, unequal economic development, various secessionist movements, and above all the rise of the authoritarian, repressive state under Indira Gandhi fuelled this sense of betrayal and disillusionment among the people and the intelligentsia. The themes of betrayal by the postcolonial leaders and the deterioration of the democratic ethos of the nation are the main focus in many novels produced in the 1980s and 90s, and it is the focus of the next section.

IV.

Rushdie's Midnight's Children encompasses thirty years of Indian history—from 1947, the year of its Independence to 1977. The main impulse behind his choice is clarified by him in one of his statements:

> It seems to me that the period between '47 and '77—the period from independence to the Emergency—had a kind of shape to it; it represented a closed period in the history of the country. That shape becomes part of the architecture of the book.[93]

Rushdie sees a particular shape in this thirty year period which encompasses two momentous events of Indian history: the Independence and the Emergency. That this shape is dependent upon some kind of meaning he gives to it, is also suggested by Saleem in the novel:

> ....at the end of 1947, life in Bombay was as teeming, as manifold, as multitudinously shapeless as ever...except that I had arrived; I was already beginning to take my place at the centre of the universe; and by the time I had finished, I would give meaning to it all (MC 126).

Rushdie's meaning is grounded on the assumption that India as a nation, the newly independent country is of a mythical character because it is the result of a collective dream a large number of people of different communities and regions. Rushdie believes that the problems of the nation after its birth are intimately connected with this:

> India, the new myth—a collective fiction in which everything was possible, a fable rivalled only by two other mighty fantasies: money and God (MC 111).

Rushdie is also suggesting that the myth and the dream are fragile. This collective dream, this myth or fiction of a unified nation always carries the danger of collapse. Through Saleem, Rushdie ignores India's past before 1947, because he thinks that it was mythical and imaginary. But to counter this, he invents another India, which is also imaginary. While the first one is so bad that it had better be forgotten, the second one is a country of hope and promise. It is a new nation which deserves an epic written on it of which Saleem and the specially gifted children of the midnight hour could be the heroes. But this myth and dream proved to be fragile; this fiction and myth always carried within it the dangers of collapse. What ultimately results out of all the hopes, dreams and gifts is failure, and Rushdie could write only "an epic of failure".[94]

This epic failure of the promise of the new nation is shown by Rushdie through the growth and ultimate collapse of the midnight's children. These 1001 magical children, "fathered by...history" (MC 117) were born with extraordinary powers, and they carried "...the seeds of a future which would genuinely differ from anything the world had seen up to that time (MC 193). Rushdie writes that the children suggested the new direction the country was supposed to take:

> Midnight's children can be made to represent many things, according to your point of view: they can be seen as the last throw of everything antiquated and retrogressive in our myth-ridden nation, whose defeat was entirely desirable in the context of a modernizing, twentieth-century economy; or as the true hope of freedom, which is now forever extinguished; but what they must not become is the bizarre creation of a rambling, diseased mind. (MC 197)

The passage suggestively implies that Rushdie understands the post-1947 past of India from the perspective of the late 1970s. Rushdie implies that in 1947, India got a chance to come out from the shadows of myth and legend, to become a truly democratic country embracing the notions of modernity and secularism, and thus turn into a land of promise and new dreams. He does not want the children of promise to turn into "the bizarre creation of a rambling, diseased mind". They have to stand for the new qualities, though the task is risky and hazardous.

But the dangerous and deplorable past overtook the present, as the passing times began to display many unhealthy tendencies. Regional loyalties, prejudices, and the relapse of the government into the fabulous past during the times of Mrs. Indira Gandhi—all of this ate into the

democratic, secular structure of the country. Saleem connects the collapse of democracy to the corruption of the government by these old elements. Saleem says that the government under Mrs. Gandhi fell ubder the ominous spells of power and astrology. Saleem writes, "Benarsi seers help to shape the history of India" because the "Indira Sarkar, like her father's administration, consults daily with purveyors of occult lore" (MC 379).

The high expectations at the moment of birth, both of Saleem and the new nation, were undermined by disappointments and disasters. The personal tragedies and injuries of Saleem find their parallel in the problems and disasters in India's march towards the building of a secular democracy. Independence gave rise to the "many-headed monster" which suggests the rising tide of communalism, regional hatred, language riots, Hindu fundamentalism, poverty etc. Rushdie's uneasiness regarding the fissiparous tendencies in India, noted at Independence, has reason to deepen after it. For example, the language wars made him realize that the problems of hatred and divisions were not over yet. Rushdie comes down heavily on the bifurcation of provinces in India on the basis of language, by associating it with their dreams, produced by heat and characterized by "fantasy; unreason; lust". The language marchers of Bombay are in effects its victims.

The most serious consequence of the regional hatred was that it tainted the midnight's children who started taking after the adults as dissensions set in. This hatred led to other hatreds, based on religion and class:

> The rich children turned up their noses at being in such lowly company; Brahmins began to feel uneasy at permitting even their thoughts to touch the thoughts of untouchables; while among the low-born, the pressures of poverty and Communism were becoming evident...and, on top of all this, there were clashes of personality, and the hundred squalling rows which are unavoidable in a parliament composed entirely of half-grown brats (MC 248).

The Midnight's Children's Conference fails to forge a unity and it disintegrates as; the younger generation becomes a victim of the fissiparous tendencies of the nation. Apart from Saleem, Shiva and Parvati—who are sufficiently individualized to become characters as such—the rest of the children remain, in Rushdie's words, "a kind of vague collective entity...a kind of

metaphor of hope and possibility, which, one day, was destroyed. A metaphor of hope betrayed and possibility denied". (MC 6)

The despotic rule of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and her declaration of the Emergency destroyed the hopes and promises symbolized by the children who were born along with the new nation:

> ...the truest, deepest motive behind the declaration of a State of Emergency was the smashing, the pulverizing, the irreversible discombobulation of the children of midnight (MC 412).

This undoing of the magical children and the wanton destruction of democratic ideals by Mrs. Indira Gandhi were a kind of betrayal of the ideals democracy and freedom envisioned by the masses.

In Midnight's Children, Rushdie presents the Emergency in all its grim and evil aspects. He gives a brief account of the events leading to the declaration of the Emergency. He shows Mrs. Gandhi's utter disregard for the legislature, and her repressive measures. By banning dissent of any and every kind, it brought the democratic process to a grinding halt and led to the arrest of a large number of people. With trenchant irony, we are told that the arrested people included "anyone who had ever made the mistake of sneezing during the Madam's speeches..." (MC 499). Metaphorically, if the birth of Saleem's son is equated with the birth of Mrs. Gandhi's Emergency; his sickness symbolizes the sickness of the entire nation.

In Rushdie's view, the most ominous development of Mrs. Gandhi's reign—one which proved to be disastrous to Indian national life—was was the intrusion of Hindu thinking into its politics and history. Saleem understood that Mrs. Gandhi had elevated herself to the status of a Devi, because she feared the potential deities in the midnight's children. That is why in her new incarnation she represents to him the most fearful aspects of a dictatorial ruler, who exploited religion to mythify her personal rule:

> ...we, the magical children of midnight, were hated feared destroyed by the Widow, who was not only Prime Minister of India but also aspired to be Devi, the mother-goddess in her most terrible aspect, possessor of the shakti of the gods, a

> multi-limbed divinity with a centre-parting and schizophrenic hair.... And that was how I learnt my meaning in the crumbling palace of the bruised-breasted women (MC 422).

During the 1970s and 80s, Rushdie repeatedly attacked Indira Gandhi and the ruling Congress Party in essays and interviews; Midnight's Children was his first major attempt in fiction to address the "betrayal" of India by its government. Indira Gandhi sought to impose a very particular and homogeneous religious nationalism upon one of the largest and most diverse collectives in the world. Indira Gandhi and the Congress Party, in particular, employed this myth to impose a unitary and homogeneous vision of nation upon its people. Where the fictionalized communities in the novel espouse ideals of tolerance, Indira, according to Rushdie, ruthlessly exploits ethnic divisions between Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims. Rushdie finds the equation of leader and nation dangerous because it removes social agency from individuals; the leader or epic hero becomes the sole force for effecting positive social change. And the repeated failures of such communities in the novel point to the inevitable disappointments to which they lead. Late in the novel, Saleem recalls believing that

> one day soon the snake-charmer Picture Singh would follow in the footsteps of Mian Abdullah so many years ago; that, like the legendary Hummingbird, he would leave the ghetto to shape the future by the sheer force of his will; and that, unlike my grandfather's hero, he would not be stopped until he, and his cause, had won the day ... but, but. Always a but but. What happened happened. We all know that. (MC 477)

Within the post-independence Indian context, the hero brings not progress but failure. Indeed, we see here Rushdie's own frustration with the political realities of India: opposition movements fail to provide a legitimate alternative because they do not differ from the Congress Party on the fundamental point of leadership. The history of the nation itself is marked by contrasting promise and disappointment.

Rushdie, in the beginning, hints that the faults of government can be attributed to the supposed novelty of the forms, and seen as mere stumbling along the path of inevitable

progresstowards a universal ideal of democracy. But gradually he comes down heavily on the leaders of postcolonial India, the elite inheritors of political power, the politicians, officials and activists in accommodating inherited institutions to the pressuresof the new nation states. Rushdie asserts that the promise of a unified India collapsed in the face of a sectarianism, and corruption cultivated by the nation's own leaders.

The themes of betrayal by the postcolonial leaders and the deterioration of the democratic ethos of the nation are the main focus in many novels produced in the 1980s and 90s. Apart from Rushdie, this theme has been treated by writers like Tharoor, Mistry and Sahagal. Neelam Srivastava says: "The period of the National Emergency (1975-77) can be identified as a crucial historical watershed that marked the beginning of Indian intellectuals' reassessment of the meaning of Indian democracy and the 'achievements' of the postcolonial state".[95] The development of the nascent republic and its constitutional ideals, wars and crises in the cabinet government, the rampant corruption and gradual collapse of democratic ethos in the country are some of the common motifs in these novels. While, the Emergency and the rule of Mrs. Gandhi are given a large part in Midnight's Children, The Great Indian Novel and Such a Long Journey, they form almost the entire narrative structure of Sahagal's Rich Like Us.

Tharoor's novel The Great Indian Novel is a scathing criticism of the leaders and politicians who betrayed the promise and idealism of the pre-independent time with their greed for power and narrow political gains and rampant corruption. His version of Indian history concerns great men and is fashioned by a grand moral and ethical design: "In my epic I shall tell of past, present and future, of existence and passing, of efflorescence and decay, of death and rebirth; of what is and of what was, of what should have been". (TGIN 18)

Tharoor's version of the historical account runs roughly from the time when Gandhi entered into Indian politics till the time Indira Gandhi returned to power after the fall of the Janata government. Though Tharoor's account of Indian history is guided by the leading lights of the day, he does not reify them and points out their weaknesses and fallibilities. Tharoor's revisionary historiography achieves its strength and attraction because of his insightful, fresh and thoughtful, sometimes irreverent, subversive re-assessment of the leaders and politicians and statesmen who dominated Indian politics during pre-as well as post-Independent period. Bhisma/Ganga Dutta/Gandhi dominates the narrative, but his deeds, in postcolonial India, have been reduced to the realm of textual experience:

> It is in the history books now, and today's equivalents of the snot-nosed brats of Motihari have to study it for their examinations on the nationalist movement. But what can the dull black-on-white of their textbooks tell them of the heady excitement of those days? (TGIN50)

The two later progenies are Dhritarashtra and Pandu, who stand for Nehru and Subhash Bose. It is suggested that Nehru gained influence in the party hierarchy and succeeded in controlling the reins of power in post-Independence India, because of the blessings of Gandhi. Karna who stands for Jinnah, is also a contender for power, though circumstances of his birth prevent him from coming to the forefront. He succeeds in taking away a chunk of territory from the country to set up the state of Karnistan, which stands for Pakistan. This last detail is a deviation from the original. In India, except for a brief period, Nehru is succeeded by Duryadhani, who stands for Mrs. Gandhi. She tries her best to keep the Pandavas away from the seat of power and devises stratagems even to finish them off. Most of the time, the Pandavas are away from the corridors of power and very appropriately spend their time with their Guru Drona who stands for Jayaprakash Narayan.

Though the narrative praises Gandhi's role in India's struggle for freedom, it does not overlook the amusing aspects of his personality and thinking. Repeated attention is drawn to his numerous fads and his baggage from the past: enemas, sanitary preoccupations, fasts, love for cows, etc. Tharoor also points out the serious implications of Gandhi's consistent exploitation of Hindu symbols for galvanizing people against the British; this made the leaders of other communities (especially Jinnah) conscious of the rising tide of Hindu influence to their identity (an issue that Mukul Kesavan deals with in his novel Looking through Glass). It was a source of conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims which led to the division of the country. Like a lot of postcolonial historians, Tharoor points out the disapproval of Jinnah for Gandhi in the novel where we see Karna getting uneasy about Gangaji's "traditional attire, his spiritualism, his spouting of the ancient texts, his ashram, his consistent harking back to an idealized pre-British past..." (TGIN 142)

Tharoor also unequivocally criticizes Gandhi for slackening his grip over the Congress and other leaders and letting the question of partition be decided by his lieutenants. Gandhi's

murderer in the novel Shikhandin calls him a total failure and berates him for his dereliction of duty and also for neglecting the issue of leadership of the party: "You make me sick, Bhishma. Your life has been a waste, unproductive, barren. You are nothing but an impotent old walrus sucking other reptiles' eggs, an infertile old fool...a man who is less than a woman. The tragedy of this country springs from you..." (TGIN 232) The narrative suggests that Gangaji/Gandhi dies a defeated and disillusioned man, and the last words that Tharoor puts in his mouth before death is not the historical "Hey Ram", but "I...have...failed". (TGIN 262)

Tharoor, like Rushdie, is extremely critical of Nehru and the Nehruvian ideology. Most of these novelists, like the Subaltern historians, speak about the failure of the nation-state and all that Nehru stood for. Nehru's abilities and his role in the politics of pre and post-independence India is suggested in the allegorical frame itself. As Dhritarashtra, he is made into Gandhi's "blind and visionary son," with a vaulting ambition and monumental ego. His English education gave him only "a formidable vocabulary and the vaguely abstracted manner of the over-educated" (TGIN 41). His blindness is used to a scathing metaphorical effect: "...the blind man's gift of seeing the world not as it was, but as he wanted it to be" (TGIN 85), made him completely out of tune with the reality around him. The account also implicates him in the hasty deal of the partition of the country, by colluding with Mountbatten and his charming wife Edwina.

Nehru's short-sightedness in the handling of the Kashmir issue, his foreign policies, especially his promotion of the non-aligned movement are criticized in the novel. The only credit Nehru gets is that he was not guilty of meanness or villainy. When he is advised by his ministers to deal with his political adversaries according to the tenets of Kautilya's Arthasastra, he does not accept it. Tharoor's novel, like Rushdie's Midnight's Children depicts the failure of the vision of the nation-state. Both of them expose the betrayal of the idealism of independence and the dream of a plural, secular country. According to Kanishka Choudhury,

> Tharoor, as a student in postcolonial India, has also been presented with textual versions of the independence struggle and its moments of heady idealism. For many writers of his generation, therefore, the failure of independence becomes the greatest tragedy of modern India. India, like the majority of colonized nations, overestimated the emancipatory potential of independence.[96]

Tharoor also assesses the roles of other political figures like Subhash Bose and Jayaprakash Narayan. Subhash is praised for his efforts in the cause of India's freedom, but Tharoor also explains how he perished because of his quixotic dreams. The role of Jayaprakash Narayan, the Mahaguru Drona in the novel, in his fight against the dictatorship of Indira Gandhi is noteworthy:

> I still believe that the political ethos in the country, fuelled by Drona's idealistic but confused uprising which a variety of political opportunists had joined and exploited, could have led the country nowhere but to anarchy. (TGIN 369)

Tharoor praises him for his total lack of greed for power and for his strenuous efforts in safeguarding the democratic rights and ideals of the country. But the narrator calls him a "flawed Mahaguru" for he was "a man whose goodness was not balanced by the shrewdness of the original.... He had offered inspiration but not involvement, charisma but not change, hope but no harness" (TGIN 402).

The time of Indira Gandhi's rule, and her imposition of the Emergency is regarded as the most trying time for Indian democracy. The subsequent struggle for democracy then becomes, for Tharoor, the battle of Kurukshetra or the great Bharata war. It is interesting as well as significant that the emergency has been considered by the Indian English novelists as the most traumatic event of post-independent India. Rushdie, Nayantara Sahagal, Rohinton Mistry and many other writers return to this event in their fiction. Sahagal, in Rich Like Us dramatizes its effect on the general ethos of the country. In Rushdie, it becomes the focal point of the degradation in the political and secular character of the country. In Tharoor's account, it is part of the deteriorating democratic culture of the country, because of which the blame on Mrs. Gandhi is not as pronounced as in the other two.

In the final analysis, The Great Indian Novel is a novel about the coming into being of a nation-state and the challenges and struggles on the way. In The Great Indian Novel, V. V. explains:

> I have portrayed a nation in struggle but omitted its struggle against itself, ignoring the regionalists and autonomists and separatist and secessionists who

> even today are trying to tear the country apart. To me, Ganapathi, they are of no consequence in the story of India; they seek to diminish something that is far greater than they will ever comprehend". (TGIN 112)

The novel illustrates Tharoor's disillusionment with the country's declining political culture. Its institutional structures, such as the press, bureaucracy, and party system have not done much in promoting any meaningful change in the life of the nation. Tharoor makes us believe that the Indian people in general have perfected the art of living with whatever they get, strengthening their vestiges of fatalism. He visualizes a bleak future for the country which could not live up to the promise of glory and nobility as seen during anti-colonial struggle.

The period of Emergency also forms the background of Nayantara Sahgal's novel Rich Like Us, a novel that depicts the same lament of the passing of hopes and idealism of anti-colonial nationalism, betrayal of the ruling elites, and the emergence of repressive regime. Sahgal's novels have treated various aspects of the political changes occurring in Indian society since the early nineteen thirties. The novel Rich Like Us marks the period when Nehruvian socialism was supplanted by the capitalist turn in Mrs. Gandhi policies. For Nehru, socialism was an important aspect of postcolonial nation-building, as he insisted that socialism was the only means to fight against imperialism and poverty, and any kind of straying from it meant a "betrayal" for the national project of India. Sahgal, in Rich Like Us not only denounces the dictatorship of Indira Gandhi, but as a committed socialist, she also exposes the capitalist invasion of India.The novel is one of the most sustained fictional explorations of the deep political crisis of the 1970s India. The novel depicts Mrs. Gandhi's abusive behaviour in 1975-77, regarding censorship, imprisonment of political dissidents and massive sterilisation campaigns. Thus, the background of Rich Like Us is one in which the common man was hit hard by political violence and the intelligentsia who invested in the socialist project for India experienced bitter disappointment and a sense of hopelessness.

In the novel, Mr. Newman and Devikins (Dev) embodies everything that Sahgal is writing against, as both of them see the period of Emergency as an extremely profitable time for business and foreign investments. According to Devikins, the villain in the plot of Sahgal's novel, Emergency certainly "is good for business at the top".[97] If Dev justifies it on economic and business considerations, politicians consider it a logical outcome of the evolving process of the

political structure of the country. The minister who came to inaugurate Dev's new project, links the Emergency with the Vedic times.

The motto of Sahgal's villain, Dev (Devikins) the arch-capitalist, is that "business is business". This kind of attitude which justifies corruption or irresponsibility as a matter of necessity made the rich businessmen and politicians to disregard the interests of the common men. For example, Sahgal portrays how the piece of land granted for constructing the Happyola factory happened to be a rural belt requisitioned from the villagers. Then there are scattered references in the text to the pet project of Mrs. Ghandi's son, which is to build a car with "all India" components. Sahgal tries to inscribe in her text the human cost, as discarded side effects, of business at the top. Thus Sahgal portrays India as a state under a sort of home colonialism, whose freedom and borders still are at stake.

The production of the fizzy drink is a cover up for an underground warehouse to hide imported car parts and engines. The connection between illegal business and the complicity of the government is established on two grounds: Devikins becomes extremely powerful and successful the moment he gets a contact in politics, materialized in Ravi, the bureaucrat. Ravi is a representative of the majority civil servants of the time who gave unstinted support to the authoritarian regime of Mrs. Gandhi. It confirms Sahgal's earlier finding that he civil servants represented the thinking and mentality of the pre-colonial times; they believed that ordinary people needed to be controlled and directed with a strong hand. Thus, the bureaucracy went along with the anti-people and repressive plans and policies of the Prime Minister. Some officers like Ravi not only undertook to motivate people to strengthen the hands of the Prime Minister, but more sinisterly, invented a rational for the action of the Prime Minister by propagating a new philosophy of government, especially among the lower rungs of society. At one place, Ravi explains to the taxi-drivers:

> ...what were the Government, the Cabinet, the Ministers, the States, the municipalities? They were there to do Her bidding. What was the country? It was She, who like the many-armed goddess would ever be victorious against those who were plotting to dethrone her. (RLU 169)

This kind of deification of Mrs. Gandhi which sought to equate her with the country (giving birth to the infamous slogan "India is Indira and Indira is India") gave her the power to become more ruthless and repressive, destroying the last vestige of participatory and popular democratic governance. The protective border Sahgal envisages around India, is not necessarily aimed against "foreigners", but rather directed against corrupted political elites (home colonialism) without whose support, aggressive neo-colonial practices would never take hold of the subcontinent.

In the structure of the novel, the moment Sonali loses her innocent belief in the prominence of socialist ideals for the Indian state is a key scene. That is the moment she diagnoses the coming crisis in the post-independence Indian state as the deviance from an ideal agenda, previously set at the independence moment. Against this ideal, the Emergency features as a post-utopia regime, with no room for committed intellectuals like Sonali. As an honest and outspoken person, Sonali finds this degradation and corruption in the heart of the body politic appalling:

> We were all taking part in a thinly disguised masquerade, preparing the stage for a family rule. And we were involved in a conspiracy of silence...So long as it didn't touch us, we played along, pretending the Empress's new clothes were beautiful. (RLU 211)

Her criticism of the elite class is severe, as she calls their action a "collective will to cowardice".

Only when Sonali falls a victim to the sinister power game, that she begins to understand the pain and oppression to which she had not given attention till then. For example, she understands the frightful experience of bride burning in the colonial period, and the apathy of the authority towards it. She is now able to link that apathy to the neo-colonial government at the centre. She also visualizes the long-term effects of censorship, flouting of all democratic practices and norms, and the creation of an atmosphere of hate and fear—all of which destroyed the dream of hope and promise of people like her father, who had fought for the freedom of the country.

Rohinton Mistry in his novels like Such a Long Journey and A Fine Balance depict the same disillusionment and sense of betrayal in the postcolonial nation. Like Sonali in Rich Like Us, Gustad Noble the protagonist in Mistry's novel Such a Long Journey realizes the rot in the

so-called democratic structure of the nation when his own life begins to fall apart under outside pressures. Mistry's novel Such a Long Journey revolves around the themes of family and friendship, which become metonyms for society and nation.

The world of Such a Long Journey is one that is threatened by growing Hinduisation, fanaticism and religious intolerance, as well as by internal dissent and war and corruption. Gustad Noble and his family in their own small ways offer resistance to the crumbling of the secular and idealistic edifice of the Indian nation. Gustad through his friend Major Bilimoria is caught up in the game of power politics played by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. At stake is the birth of the new nation of Bangladesh. The petty quarrels in the neighbourhood and the discontent in his household find their resonance in the bleak events of the outside world. The events outside engulf the lives of the characters and the whole family of Gustad is in crisis like the nation outside.

Gustad keeps the windows to his flat blacked out, a legacy from the previous war with Pakistan, an omen of further warfare, and a symbol of a distrust of the light. The news from the radio and from the papers is of another war and its accompanying atrocities. The city of Bombay is threatened by the bigotry of Hindu extremists in Shiv Sena and its mobs. Gustad himself survives, enduring a steady decline in his fortunes that dates from his father's bankruptcy but is exacerbated by the deterioration of the national economy. In the family, Gustad's delight in the news that his older son, Sohrab, has qualified for admission to the Indian Institute of Technology is clouded by the boy's refusal to follow his father's plans for him.

Gustad has to pay for his loyalty to Bilimoria and is threatened by the underworld which was involved in the transfer of funds to fuel insurgent activity in what was then the Eastern Wing of Pakistan. Gustad goes on a journey from Bombay to Delhi to seethe friend he believes has betrayed him, Major Bilimoria. Bilimoria has disappeared, and then imposed on Gustad the task of collecting a mysterious parcel. It is on a visit to the Bonesetter that he meets the artist whom he invites to paint the wall of the compound, partly to give him space for his work, partly to save the wall from the municipality's plans for its destruction. When the parcel is finally delivered, it proves to contain money that he must deposit in small lots in the bank, circumventing government regulations to do so. The request is backed by shadowy threats to the safety of himself and his family. Then he is asked to withdraw it again. Finally, he is invited to go to Delhi to find the answers to the mystery.In the words of Mclaren:

> This train journey is also a comedy of the Indian people confronted by bureaucracy. It has some of Kipling's exuberant enjoyment of the sheer variety and pressure of Indian life, but tinged with a melancholy that reminds the reader of India's descent both from the certainty of the Raj and the early hopefulness of Independence. It takes Gustad both to the centre of the political order, and to Bilimoria, who has been for Gustad both the stable centre of domestic order, and the guarantor of both human decency and national order.[98]

At its end he finds that the centre is indeed corrupt, a stronghold of the nation's enemies rather than citadel against them. Yet, paradoxically, the journey also restores Bilimoria, who, he learns, was himself betrayed. While this revelation destroys Gustad's final trust in the state, it gives him back the trust in friendship that he needs if he is to continue living his life. By learning that the major's own loyalty and trust has been used to destroy him, Gustad is able to understand the strength of loyalty and the corresponding depths of corruption that the state has fallen into by betraying those who have most strongly upheld it. I. Allan Sealy's The Trotter-Nama is another novel which depicts the attempt of a cultural minority, the Anglo-Indians, to re-inscribe them in the national imaginary. Siddhartha Deb's novel The Point of Return describes the exilic condition of cultural minority (in this case the Bengali Hindu migrants) in postcolonial India.

In locating the critique of nationalism in an alternative view of history that itself is derived from the often silenced voices of the nation, the cultural minorities, subaltern citizens, and silenced gendered subjectivities, these novels re-write the nation in terms of plurality and heterogeneity against the nation-state's attempt to suppress them. The political logic of nation states require, that "to exist at all they must claim the monopoly of all relationships between peoples" (TSL 230). Therefore the construction of national identities is made possible then only at the expense of other identities and relationships. National identity not only marginalizes all other identities and relationships of people across nations; it also requires the suppression of contradictions and contesting identities *within* the nation. But these writers write of a different India, of a different Indian or national identity which is not monologic or homogenous but plural and heteroglossic. The following section examines the ways in which the writers under the present study write this plural, dialogic nation into being.

V.

Early nationalist and anticolonial authors often countered essentialist depictions of the colonized peoples with their rather monolithic portrayals of their communities and cultures, deploying what may have been a necessary "strategic essentialism", as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak suggests in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?".[99] For example, anticolonial writers from African countries like Ghana, Kenya or Senegal, in response to colonialist condemnation, affirmed a pan-African Culture rather than a specific national or regional culture, and it is defined in racial terms. Early nationalist fiction and drama by writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Wole Soyinka avoid the pan-African racialization found in the writings of Kwame Nkrumah or Leopold Senghor, and instead, locate their works in very specific communities—Igbo, or Gikuyu, or Yoruba. C. L. Innes says:

> Rather than affirming essential characteristics, their works bear witness to the workings of a culture within a community in the process of encountering change. But the Igbo or Gikuyu or Yoruba community portrayed is also presented as a metonym for the nation as a whole, for Nigeria or Kenya, and indeed, is often *read* as a metonym for the peoples of the African continent as a whole.[100]

We have already seen this phenomenon in the case of Indian nationalist writers like Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan whose novels represent small village communities and/or Hindu culture as metonymic of India.

In their insistence on including previously ignored subjectivities and giving space and voice to the often marginalized, suppressed people and communities, the writers of the 80s and 90s not only contest and resist the nation-state's claim to be the sole and representative of the people but also differ sharply from earlier Indian English writers like Raja Rao and Narayan who visualized a homogenous nation based on a fixed notion of identity. Writers like Rushdie, Tharoor, Sealy, Chandra, Mistry and Deb reject this nationalist drive or will to uniformity in the name of a pure Indianness, and charts out an alternative India, a mongrel nation which is made up

of many fragments. One of the most significant aspects of these writers is that while they attempt to re-write the nation by acknowledging economic and cultural diversity and plurality, they typically do it from the perspective of narrators or central characters who are members of a minority or marginalized groups, not identified with the majority.

Rushdie, in Midnight's Children, aims at rich inclusiveness rather than neat or mechanical unity, which is against his principles. Rushdie wants to "leave loose ends" and imply "a multitude of stories" (MC 239). Saleem himself embodies the principle of inclusiveness when he says: "To understand just one life, you have to swallow the world" (MC 109). A consciousness of the multiplicity and heterogeneity of India's history is imposed subtly on the reader. The opening pages announce that "Tai…is about to set history in motion" (MC 3), and he does so in more than one sense. His references to Alexander and Jehangir evoke the Western invader and the Muslim Empire, respectively. A folk figure, Tai introduces a leitmotif, the folk belief hat Christ spent his last days in Kashmir. His folk image of Christ is not the traditional, ascetic one but bald and gluttonous. The belief implies that Christianity is not only a religion imported and imposed by the imperialists but possesses a native strain; and that no rigid division between East and West exists. The Hindu and Islamic inheritances are naturally more prominent in the novel. The fact that all these form a mix is important. This is underlined by Saleem's multiple parentage and character. Rushdie states:

> it is completely fallacious to suppose that there is such a thing as a pure, unalloyed tradition from which to draw… [T]he very essence of Indian culture is that we possess a mixed tradition, a mélange of elements as disparate as ancient Mughal and contemporary Coca-Cola American… Eclecticism, the ability to takefrom the world what seems fitting and to leave therest, has always been a hallmark of the Indian tradition, and today it is at the centre of the bestwork being done both in the visual arts and in lit-erature.[101]

The drive in the text to construct both a biography of Saleem and a history of India cannot be realised through a single history. Rushdie celebrates the ideas of pluralism and multiplicity, and the novel shows a strong antagonism towards cultural authenticity. These writers insist that throughout the long history of the country, and more so after its "bastard" coming into being after

decolonization, India had always been such and that the idea of a unitary nation is a myth and an imaginary construct devised by official and hegemonic nation-state in its drive to exclude those who problematize such a construct.

The ideas of plurality and multiplicity, and the anarchy of the proliferation of the marginalized and the repressed for space in the official map of the nation are at the heart of such novels as The Trotter-Nama, Red Earth and Pouring Rain and The Point of Return. In both The Trotter-Nama and Red Earth and Pouring Rain, we see the superabundance of stories, events, characters as well as histories and cultures with multiple interconnections incorporating the polyglot, multivalent reality of India which defies the monomaniacal, authoritarian impulses of both Western imperialism and postcolonial nationalism.

It had always been problematic for the Anglo-Indians to define themselves, or to emplace themselves in the country. There were people among them who had no difficulty imagining themselves as English. In his later years Thomas Henry Trotter got disillusioned with the British. But his daughter, whom he named Victoria after the British Empress, always maintained that they were English. While a lot of people from the Trotter family approved of the Ilbert Bill, Victoria was vehemently against it, because she did not want an Indian to sit in judgment over her. As the year of Indian Independence drew nearer, Victoria prayed "And grant our leaders wisdom in this hour of peril," and "And lead thy flock safely into the flock" (TTN 411). Always an European at heart, Victoria could find a "home" only in death, as she lay dying, she told her daughter in law, "Queenie, I am going Home" (TTN 487).

Queenie is another character who always longed to go to England, for she felt that is where she could be at home. She was always vexed about her place in the world and regarding the question of her true home:

> She turned the word *home* in her mind, slowly, deliberately, wondering what it concealed. ....what was under the word *home*? Did it mean simply the place where things were the right side up and familiar-looking? But what was familiar? Could you be familiar with what you had never touched—like the inside of a snow-globe.... Was home the place where one was born? Or the place where one hoped to bury one's bones? .... Was it simply where you happened to be at the moment? Or the place in your mind where you weren't? The place of your deepest sleep?

The place of your waking dreams? The place of your father's fathers (where was that)? Or your mother's mothers (was it Mandalay)? Could you have two homes...? (TTN 489)

Sealy's portrayal is ruthlessly honest—imperial scorn and prejudice are balanced by the Anglo-Indian refusal to be considered Indian, and their inability to come to terms with the communities around them notwithstanding their love for the country. Maria Couto says, "Whereas Indians devised a colonial interface to circumvent and survive the ideology of colonialism, the Anglo-Indian persisted in seeing himself as made in the image of the ruling class".[102]

This insulting label on the Anglo-Indians as "a half-caste" or deplorable "hybrid community" is one that began to be applied to them from the time the British started to consolidate their political and military power in India. The British maligned the Anglo-Indian community for their hybrid condition and identity. The racial pride in their assumed superiority as a pure race made the British disown this hybrid community. But Sealy's novel is an extravagant and epic (albeit farcical) celebration of hybridity. Nothing is pure, straightforward, linear, absolutely fixed in the novel—from the characters, profession, and identity to food and recipes.

Elise, the German lady, and one of Justin's wives, also known as the Jarman Begam, is "the casual daughter of a foreign ink vendor and a local courtesan. The girl's father, an English-speaking burgher from Ceylon who posed as a Dutchman and was taken for a German, had lost favour at court and been poisoned (with his own ink, it was said)" (TTN 184-185). The characters wear more than one mantle. Sunya is a Brahmin and a poulterer, called "egg-Brahmin" by others. Yakub Khan is the Chief Steward of Sans Souci, also baker, politician, also referred to I the text as "baker-and-philosopher", "baker-and-master-gelder" (TTN 58). Hakim Ahmed is an herbalist and dentist, and plays his own brief part in the court intrigue that ensues after Justin's accidental death. Fonseca is the barber and ice manager, and a collector of artefacts, a person of mixed racial elements. He went on to found the "first modern beauty parlour in the Orient" (TTN 91).

Justin himself was a man of many contradictions and of incongruous character traits. He was a Frenchman-turned Englishman, drew salary from the Nawab. He took to the native ways of life, dressed like a Muslim and enjoyed Indian food, his kitchen at Sans Souci being a veritable

gallery of cooks gathered from all parts of India and the world to cater to his gastronomic passion:

> Muslim cooks from Nakhlau, Hindu cooks from Benares, Parsi cooks from Bombay, Christian cooks from Goa, Daman, and Diu, Jewish cooks from Cochin, cooks from Assam to Gujrat, from Kashmir to Kerala, cooks from Trans-oxiana and those parts, egg-Brahmins from Rohilkhand,..... Non-garlic Jains, chapati Punjabis.......Pahadis who use fruits, Burmans who use coconut, turmeric-grinders from Malaya, Cambodian gingermen, Javanese peppermen....... muscle-bound masalchis, footloose spice-tasters, shapely oilmen.....stringy kneaders, rakish stokers, brawny strainers, tetchy peelers, stodgy griddle men, ... Tibetan marrowmen, Szechuan noodle-winders, Kazhaki pemmican-traders, Georgian goulash-turners, Armenian cinnamon-shakers, Iraqi date-mashers, Phoenician confectioners... (TTN 126-27)

Throughout the novel, Sealy works out a subversive narrative with the extensive employment of metaphors of food, eating, dress, with the intention of countering colonial stereotyping and attempting postcolonial recuperation by glorifying hybridity.

The gradual decline of the community is apparent after independence as the members find themselves protected (Nehru ensured two seats in the Parliament and a seat in the Legislatures of seven states for adequate representation of the community) but confined to clerical jobs, running the railways, the posts and the telegraphs and also the lower orders of the police force. Sealy in the last sections of the novel shows how the majority struggle to distance themselves from India, claiming to be Domiciled Europeans and many such made their escape in the early years of the century and after independence. Of those who migrated around and after 1947 the settlers in Australia appear to have come into their own, while those in Britain are perhaps still haunted by the racial bias that blighted their loves in India. In Nirad Chaudhury's classification of minorities, the Anglo-Indians in India remain as "half-caste" or "genetically half-caste" minorities.[103]

The rhetoric of nationalism suggests that membership of the nation is regulated by strict rules of exclusion and inclusions which allow neither for blurred boundaries nor the generous accommodation of "outsiders" within its family. These "outsiders" may be migrants, minorities

within the country, the disadvantaged and dispossessed, or indeed, any group that challenges the exclusionary practices of the state. But it is just this kind of exclusionary rhetoric of the nation that novels like The Trotter-Nama, Point of Return, Looking through Glass, What the Body Remembers critique.

In regard to Rushdie's celebration of heterogeneity, David Watson makes some valuable comments. He says that Saleem's writing/narration of history and the nation separates the "nation-of-the-text from the nation-of-history":

> The nation-of-history has a temporal existence in its movement towards even further progression and expansion. The nation-of-the-text is a spatial category. Writing has stripped the nation of its existence in time through the transformation of history into a narrative construct.As a spatial site the nation is determined through its insertion in a structure of difference; no transcendental signifier of history is responsible for its formation. This resists the easy totalisation of history that operates through the simple repression of difference.[104]

We have seen this tendency for repression by the nation-state or nationalist construction of history/nation not only in the creation of boundaries, and in the postcolonial subalternization of various communities and people, but also in the growing fundamentalism and repressive policies of the body politic of present-day India. Homi Bhabha defines this event in the following terms: "Counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries—both actual and conceptual—disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which imagined communities are given essentialist identities".[105]

We have also seen how Ghosh in The Shadow Lines questions this essentialist tendency in the state policies of the postcolonial nation. The novel, through its recurrent tropes of travel and memory emphasizes non-fixity. In its imaginative reconstruction of lives and history, it reveals a world where boundaries are blurred and cultures collide. It is within this hybrid context in which the narrator is immersed in London that he is finally confirmed in his refusal to accept any truth as definitive. Imagination plays a central role in this realization and acceptance of hybrid national self. In the words of Hueso:

> ...it represents the choice to configure the individual's vision of the world according to a selective and creative use of perception that is operated by multiple Others and not imposed from an omniscient Self. In the context of the idéological bases that sustain nationalism, Ghosh also reappropritaes imagination so as to contest the fiction of "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991) in which the nation is rooted.[106]

Th'amma's personal view of the nation, only those who participate in the tradition of warfare are to be considered active agents in the process of national configuration, and therefore, people like Ila is "colonial" in her view who do not deserve the endowment of nationality. But the narrator, aided by the lessons he learnt from Tridib and also from his own discoveries, goes beyond this selective imagining of the nation. His use of imagination acts as a counterpoint to the transcendental narratives of nationalism. Again in the words of Hueso, "imagination is represented as a liberating force for the individual, who is capable of retracing the links erased by the artificiality of the nation".[107]

In its retracing of the links that destabilize essentialist identities and totalizing boundaries of the nation, Vikram Chandra's Red Earth and Pouring Rain charts multiple centuries and continents. In the novel we see how history acts as the trajectory of events that causes dislocations, disjunctions, movements, and migrations. Like Ghosh, Chandra possesses a diasporic imagination which 'yokes by violence together' discrete and distant identities.

In depicting an India made up through the ages with this multiple connections and histories, Chandra's novel replaces the solid markers and destabilizes our notions of the past in the reverberations of the present. In this regard, Dora Sales Salvador says, "Chiefly, Chandra's fiction accounts for a transcultural project. In his works, one can consider that writing is understood as a way of recovering and intercommunicating cultures, but also as an open proposal that suggests another sort of creation that goes beyond fetish dichotomies between native and foreign traces, local and universal, past and present".[108]

In an interview with Andrew Teverson, Chandra once said, "The history of humanity is a history of movement, of discovery and loss. Which is why so many of our stories have always been about going somewhere else".[109] Thus, Red Earth and Pouring Rain incorporates various influences and locations and historical trajectories to represent, in the words of Alexandru "a

hybrid, traveling version of Indianness".[110] It starts from the Arabian Nights pretext of "storytelling-for-survival"; contains Sanjay's stories about nineteenth-century India, populated by European adventurers on the border between very different civilizations;and is completed by Abhay's stories about contemporary Americaas seen by international students, for whom the American experience is acomplex encounter between cultures. This structure gives the novel a highly comparative character, turning it into a project about how to compare our globalized present to the colonial past, as well as America to Europe and to India and, more generally, about how to confront otherness. Through the multiplicity of stories that grow from each other in whataims to be a never-ending process, the novel comes close to what Deleuzeand Guattari call a "principle of multiplicity"—the multiple "ceases to haveany relation to the One as subject or object, natural or spiritual reality, image and world".[111]

To Chandra, deterritorialized definitions of identity are not symptomatic of a lifestyle characteristic of the new millennium, but have always existed and are intrinsic to Indian culture. In his writings, Chandra propagates the idea that identity cannot be bound to a certain place. Chandra expresses a nomadism which is the modern condition of exile. Chandra sees this condition as a solution to the crisis of displacement. One good example is that of his own life, which he divides between the United States and India, as Abhay does (at least mentally) in Red Earth and Pouring Rain, where the life lessons taught by the two cultures are perpetually compared.

Red Earth and Pouring Rain directly problematizes, thematically and structurally, the performance of estrangement from one's homeland and return to it. The main characters—both in the frame narrative (Sanjay and Abhay) and in the stories-within-the-story (mainly George Thomas and Benoit de Boigne)—are engaged in long journeys of discovery and rediscovery. Chandra suggests that all through the centuries, people have come to India, and people from India have been going to different parts of the world. The whole idea called India comprises all these people. This transculturation process is still going on. It is like the stories, the interconnected web of stories which has no visible centre, and like a rhizome it grows and grows. If there is anything called an Indian identity, it must be rhizomatic, and not fixed or stable as the state wants it to be. Salvador says, "Red Earth and Pouring Rain is a novel about migrancy, foreigners in India, Indians abroad...In this cultural narrative knot, Chandra unifies and unravels the threads that tell

the (hi)story of India, past, present and future. He witnesses the plurality that exists in the world and transcribes that polyphony into his writing".[112]

Chandra's novel though made up of stories from various times and places, is narrated in the present when the nation is suspicious of such a borderless identity and the state celebrates fixity and fetishism of identity. Towards the end of the novel, we see that a bomb is thrown at the story-telling session by the fundamentalists who feel threatened by this narration of hybridity and acculturation and migrancy. But the story-telling does not stop. Telling stories, as the novel suggests is the essence of life, it is what gives meaning and purpose to life. The central emphasis in the novel has been the story's continuation rather than the stories themselves. This is precisely the message transmitted at the end of the novel: even though Sanjay's death cannot be avoided despite all efforts, the most important thing is that the storytelling, taken over by Abhay, goes on, so that in a sense Sanjay, its initiator survives through it.At the end of the novel, what is left of the characters' efforts to survive is the web of stories, stretching across continents and centuries.

Alexandru relates Chandra's art of story-telling to the idea of performance and performativity. She says that performative aspect in the narration not only gives rise to stories but also transforms the characters themselves, thus re-creating identities afresh. Alexandru says:

> The present moment of performance constantly reassesses the significance of the story that has just been told and consequently reevaluates that of the storytelling process as a whole. Thus, the characters grow through the stories they tell in a way that shows performativity and performance at work together: as stories are performed theatrically, realities are created as a function of the performativity of language.[113]

The significance of the non-fixity of identity and the need to be open-minded about its constant transformation is something that Chandra emphasizes strongly in his writings.

What is clear from this examination of these narrative representations of the nation is that the enunciation of the nation-space as the site of conflict disturbs the totalising representation of the nation projected through history. India is forced to signify a series of violent, contradictory struggles. Anna Guttman makes some insightful comments regarding the nature of the modern nation:

As a product of modernity, the nation might seem to fit neatly into the essentializing phase, but such a simplistic schema belies the central role that states can play in ensuring both individual and group rights and mediating between competing essentialisms, thereby facilitating the fluid, heterogeneous identities...[114]

The nation has been already declared a dead entity by postmodern critics. But as we have seen, the nation is still a crucial and, at the same time, volatile marker of identification for the Indian people. The nation remains deeply important for all the writers discussed in this work, even (indeed especially) for those who hold it up for scrutiny. Priyamvada Gopal connects this insistence with national question in Indian English novel to its historical condition of emergence:

The conditions of its emergence—out of the colonial encounter, addressing itself to empire rather than a specific region or community—meant that the Anglophone novel in the subcontinent returned repeatedly to a self-reflexive question: 'What is India(n)?'[115]

The insistence and importance of the nation in Indian English writing has been illustrated by I. Allan Sealy. In his earlier version of his magnum-opus The Trotter-Nama, the protagonist was like Saleem in Rushdie's novel, a child born at the midnight of 15th August, 1947. But he had to change it because Rushdie's novel came out earlier. Sealy explains this point of similarity by saying that this is the case of "two writers responding to the same historical moment. They have read the same book but the book is India. India is dictating, the country is doing the thinking. We do not write but are written".[116]

No matter how critical they are of the state of the nation, however disenchanted they might be regarding the failed vision of a coherent, stable, "free" nation, these writers, nonetheless, are still very much immersed, or rather, entangled in the task of envisioning a utopian nation out of the cracks and fragments. At the same time, their very representation of the fragmentariness of the nation is a reminder of the dangers of fixity, and the usefulness of the polyglot hybridity.

The attempts by these writers to substitute the histories of common lives and unrepresented stories and people for the official history, not only destabilize the absoluteness of History through re-de/scribing the "authentic history" but also relativize our historical perspectives with critical memories, thereby subverting the myths of an authentic, fixed nation. What finally emerges is an India that is riddled with historical dilemmas, paradoxes and marked with violence, cracks, fissures and fragmentariness. This picture of a plural, polyglot, uncontainable nation and constantly changing nature of Indian identity is best represented in corporeal terms by the writers. This corporeal representation of history and nation will be examined in the next chapter.

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Chapter III

History and Body

The body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs...

—Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.

The question of finding appropriate images of nationhood is a highly contested and ideologically far-reaching issue. For the emergence of new images promote alternate ways of envisioning the nation as a social construct. and facilitate the advancement of traditionally undervalued social groups as well as the potential demotion of formerly powerful groups. Re-writing of history and the re-narration of the nation from perspectives which are not overwhelmed by dominant paradigms have played crucial roles in producing the changing picture of India as evident from the discussion in the previous chapter. These changes in the representation of history and nation seek to address questions that engulf communities and people within the nation, questions like what kind of social and political entity India is and should be. The nation and history are changing, and the anxiety generated by change underscores the need for an image or model of nationhood that would enable one to gain a purchase on the developments taking place.

Rushdie says we need new metaphors to write and understand or imagine the nation. This project of imaging the nation in alternate ways has been addressed quite distinctively and forcefully by many Indian English writers. As we have already seen in the last two chapters, these texts are engaged in a fundamentally ideological conflict over how to represent the nation. The arguments put forth in this chapter go to the extent of implying that the dominant image of Indian nationhood to which these writers subscribe is not that of the land but the body. The novels by these writers intervene in the ideologically charged issue of imaging the nation by making powerful use of the body metaphor as a way of assessing the severe social problems

afflicting postcolonial India. The writers attempt to make sense of the disintegration and dissolution of the social body through the exploration of the grotesque condition and dissolution of the fictional bodies.

This chapter would examine how Indian English novels reproduce the strategies by which the history of the sub-continent is represented through the "body". This chapter presents a sustained discussion of the impact of history, in case of these novels mostly disruptive and traumatic history, on the "body." The most important questions of agency of the oppressed, the colonized and the marginalized, and of postcolonial identity can, to a large extent, be tackled through a close reading of the corporeal metaphors deployed in these texts, because, as Stallybras and White contends "the body cannot be thought separately from the social formation".[1]

Corporeal imageries are abundantly employed by these authors in making sense of the trauma, violence, chaos, and cruelty of history. Like most postcolonial writers from other regions, these writers self-consciously present history as registered on the body. Representations of markings on individual bodies (scars, diseases, dismemberments, mutilations, and losing of the "body") along with representations of internalized responses to body (impaired self-image, mental ailments, fear, ambivalence) that we find in these texts can be read as commentaries on the state (condition, health, corruption, cruelty, injustice) of the body politic. By foregrounding the fictional interface of body and history, these novels highlight the corporealizing process of Indian history. A close reading of these texts shows that they are thoroughly imbued with an insistent corporeality where the body functions mnemonically.

The body or corporeality is of significant importance in postcolonial literature and theory. In her book Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel, Sara Upstone argues that "postcolonial texts aim to magically reconfigure the body's significance in a way that marks the ultimate reduction of spatial scales, as the site of greatest colonisation becomes a resource facilitating the most powerful statements of resistance".[2] The body is a vital site by means of which structures of power, knowledge, meaning and desire get established.Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin observe:

> In a more general way the 'fact' of the body is a central feature of the post-colonial, standing as it does metonymically for all the 'visible' signs of difference, and their varied forms of cultural and social inscription, forms often either

undervalued, overdetermined or even totally invisible to the dominant colonial discourse.[3]

Minorities and the colonized, the oppressed suffer bodily subjugation in the hands of the colonizer and dominant power structures. Not only colonization, but history in general abuse the body, and the body itself becomes a literal text on which some of the most graphic and scrutable messages of history get written. Again in the words of Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin,

> "The body...has become then the literal site on which resistance and oppression have struggled, with the weapons being in both cases the physical signs of cultural difference, veils and wigs, to use Kadiatu Kenneh's terms, symbols and literal occasions of the power struggles of the dominator and dominated for possession of control and identity".[4]

In the previous chapters we have discussed the sort of historical narratives and historical shapes that these texts present. This chapter concerns itself with a somewhat different but very relevant line of argument which would, it is hoped, further supplement the main thesis: that the novels under the present study engage with not only historical shape but also body shapes. This chapter explores how grotesque realism of these texts, also play, distortion, exaggeration and deformation of body shapes, wounds, scars, markings, sickness, highlight and support their visions of history. Bodies in these novelsare inscribed with historical conflicts and paradoxes, and as such they are crucial for comprehending the visions of history that the writers attempt to represent. The contestation of nationalist history and the nationalist construction of a unitary, monologic India attempted by these writers have mostly been framed in body imageries and metaphors. Salman Rushdie's novel Midnight's Children is a prime example of this where Nehruvian concept of nation and history as proposed in The Discovery of India has been disrupted by Rushdie's extravagant body metaphors. By focusing on an India "riven by all sorts of conflicts and contradictions literalized in the disintegrating body and spirit of its central protagonist,"Midnight's Children rejects Nehru's bourgeois nationalist history and its attempts to shape a unified history of India.[5] The corporeal imageries in these novels create the picture of an

India that is suffering from the maladies of communal, economic, and ideological conflicts and rifts.

This chapter mainly explores body images in terms of Bakhtin's grotesque realism. It goes on to examine how this grotesque realism played on the site of the body problematizes the totalizing structure and meaning in historiography and the nation itself. In the previous chapters, we have already discussed how alternative historiography of these texts disrupts the fixity and monologism of official totalizing History. They also point to the possibilities of opening up spaces for different discourses. This process of disruption and creation of new structure and meaning of historiography goes hand in hand with grotesque realism.

It will be argued that "The traditional historiographic trope of 'the body politic' is undermined by stressing the discontinuous and excessive nature of the body".[6] The broken, fractured bodies in these texts, on the one hand, metaphorize the postcolonial nation with all its hegemonic tendencies to subjugate, control, and limit the pluralistic essence of Indian identity, and on the other hand, the excessive and carnivalesque nature of the bodies subvert and contest hegemonic power structures and discourses, be it colonial or postcolonial. The excessive bodies in these historical novels are seen "to imply that the body politic is not a closed and definite form".[7] While these historical novels project history as discontinuous, fragmented and not contained by the logic of linear objectivity, the excessive body becomes the preferred image to show "the unruliness of the history...of the country..."[8] Eating and other bodily functions also play crucial role in this re-presentation of history and the nation. Next to grotesque realism, this chapter will explore politics of visibility and the process of 'othering' or marginalization on the basis of corporeal difference. Finally, the chapter examines the depiction of wounding, sickness, markings, scars, torture, and disabilities in the bodies to show how the violent effects of history are seen on the texts of individual bodies.

I.

In any discussion of Indian English writing, it has rarely been pointed out that the narrative styles of much of this writing employ grotesque images and tropes that can be related

both to grotesque satire and the Bakhtinian "grotesque realism". The idea of grotesque was brought into prominence by the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. In his formulation, the grotesque encompasses a wide range of meanings from an aesthetic category denoting fantastic hybrid creatures to ideas of corporeality connected with popular/folk rituals like the carnival, and finally a representational mode that involves exaggerations, excesses, caricatures and other forms of linguistic excesses. Grotesque as a literary mode is an effective means for satirizing and critiquing social and political conditions. Among various definitions of the grotesque in literature, Bakhtin's theory of grotesque realism is chosen as the main groundwork for this chapter. Before we go on to explore the employment of grotesque realism and the corporeal images employed by the writers, it would be useful to outline some of the basic tenets of Bakhtin which are relevant to my discussion.

Mikhail Bakhtin proposes "his grotesque realism" in his famous work Rabelais and his World. He emphasizes its focus on the material bodily principle in the context of the culture of carnivals of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Corporeality plays a key role in the concept of "grotesque realism", and this corporeality centres around images of food, drinks, defecation, sexual and other bodily activities. Bakhtin reveals how the human grotesque physical features are sites of social and political conflicts. In Bakhtin's idealized account of the carnival, the stress on the collective or communal aspect of corporeality as opposed to the "private egotistic form" is prominent.[9]

Bakhtin's idea of the grotesque and his idealized account of the carnival emphasize the functions of the "lower bodily stratum". The notion of the carnivalesque celebrates the crowd and emphasizes resistance, disruption and subversion through parody and satire of structures of power. Like the mechanism of the carnival, the emphasis on the "lower bodily stratum" also effects a kind of degradation which is a debunking of the dignity usually associated with all things high, spiritual, ideal, abstract:

> To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, pregnancy and birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect but also a regenerating one.[10]

Connected to this idea of the joyous celebratory aspects of carnival degradation is his notion of the "grotesque body". The grotesque image points to that which protrudes from the body, to all that seeks to go out beyond the body's confines. Special attention, Bakhtin writes, is given to the "shoots and branches, to all that prolongs the body and links it to other bodies or to the world outside".[11] This "grotesque body" is a key element in Bakhtin's theory of carnival, which he developed based on his studies of early European folk culture. In Rabelais and his World he writes:

> [T]he essential roles belongs to those parts of the grotesque body, in which it conceives a new, second body: the bowels and the phallus. These two areas play the leading role in the grotesque image, and it is precisely for this reason they are predominantly subject to positive exaggeration, to hyperbolization.[12]

This description applies very accurately to the grotesque, excessive bodies employed by writers like Rushdie, Sealy, Chandra and Mistry, which through an overemphasis on bodily functions, excretions, and sexual acts can cause the destabilizing, scandalous behaviour that they use to subvert, and desacrilize hegemonic discourses and established hierarchies. In their project of unseating of colonial and nationalist historiography, as well as their scathing critique of the postcolonial, neo-colonial nation-state, these grotesque bodies play crucial functions as they disrupt and destabilize the monologic ideal of hegemonic powers and discourses.

The grotesque bodies in these texts, though, victimized by power and harried at the hands of history, show their subversive potential by intervening effectively in to dominant discourse. It will be suggested that the narrative styles of these writers often straddle both these notions of the grotesque. These abused, broken, grotesque, excessive bodies provide an impetus for a subversive and debunking critique of prevailing socio-political conditions and historiography. Mostly, this critique is directed against the postcolonial nation that is governed by ruthless autocratic authority in tandem with a corrupt bureaucracy. In this case, the bodies are very much grotesque products and victims of, and at the same time in contestation with history. On the other level they employ a Bakhtinian grotesque realism of collective corporeality of the subaltern class.

It was Spinoza who contended that "a body is not a fixed unit with a stable or static internal structure. On the contrary, a body is a dynamic relationship whose internal structure and

external limits are subject to change".[13] Deleuze draws on Spinoza and works through Nietzsche to define the power of the body as its capacity to affect and be affected. This power, according to Deleuze, underlines the receptivity of the body in its process of becoming and dynamic change.[14] This is a useful insight when we are about to undertake an examination of history through the body. Lisa Helps in her attempt to map Canadian body history incorporates the ideas of both Deleuze and Foucault:

> ...when we think of the body through Deleuze as a desiring organ whose power lies in its capacity to engage with, to affect, and be affected by other bodies, we can conceive of the body as the motor of history. Undeniably, however, the body is also a *product* of history, a product or an effect of systems and technologies of power and disciplinary regimes.[15]

In unravelling the corporeal dimension in Indian Engiish writing, this idea of the body as a "motor" and "product" of history is immensely fruitful.

Midnight's Childrenis a highly corporeal book. This novel, more than any other novel, displays the instability and dynamism of the body, and its ability to affect and be affected by currents of history. The birth, growth, maturity and the final fissure of Saleem and his body parallel that of postcolonial India itself. As Neil ten Kortenaar says, "The organic metaphor of the body that contains the members of the nation is central to Midnight's Children".[16] The novel is actually a debunking of the standard narrative of Indian history. It exposes the fictionality inherent in the national history. Rushdie does that by exposing, bit by bit, the fictionality of Saleem's pedigree. The physical abuse, sickness, battering, and grotesqueness suffered by Saleem and other characters are symptomatic of the newly independent nation.

The body of Saleem is the body politic of the postcolonial nation itself. Besides Saleem's and India's fates being linked, their physical features also resemble each other: Saleem's facial traits cast a fun analogue to the subcontinent of India. His geography teacher Zagallo calls his face "human geography" because it resembles the whole map of India. As Zagallo sees it, with the birthmark on the right ear embodies East Pakistan, and the stained left cheek is West Pakistan ("Pakistan ees a stain on the face of India!"); a drip from his nose represents Ceylon (MC 231-32). History of the nation has been narrativized in the novel as the record of a body's growth. The

growth of Saleem, from a foetus, intact, whole, to the final bursting point is metonymic of the growth of the nation itself.

Rushdie extensively employs the organic metaphors of the body and bodily senses to explore and comment on the new historical and political realities of the subcontinent. Speaking of this centrality of the alternative register of bodily perceptions in the novel, Jean M. Kane says:

> His condition underscores the impossibility of the novel's imaginative and political project to fashion a nation from the diverse subcontinent. Saleem's fatalistic contention is finally realized when he disintegrates as a result of this disease. His chronicle alone remains as the material container of national meaning, for the nation dies with Saleem's body.[17]

Rushdie is definitely influenced by Rabelais (as Bakhtin was) which is evident from the abundance of grotesque bodies in Midnight's Children. Rushdie, in an interview, acknowledges his debt to Rabelais, along with Gogol and Boccaccio—writers whose "outburst of large-scale fantasized, satiric, anti-epic tradition" has influenced his works. Most of the characters in Midnight's Children are "in some way broken" and they are not "fully rounded;" Saleem's body is the most grotesque and deformed among all characters.[18] Al-Azm even dubs Rushdie as "Muslim Rabelais" and he sees in Rushdie's writing "the spirit of Rabelais' debunking of the fundamental dogmas, sacraments and narratives of an outmoded medieval scholastic Christianity".[19] Both Rabelais and Rushdie crates satiric "portraitures of contemporary politics and society," and both of them ridicule authority by mingling of "the sacred and the profane, the sublime and the ridiculous".[20]

Bakhtin's idea of grotesque realism focuses on unusual physical enlargement, exaggeration and caricatures. Grotesque realism is characterized with bodily excess. The protruding body parts (genital organs, breasts, the nose, knees etc.) in grotesque realism are characterized with "excessiveness" and "superabundance,"[21] and they seek to transcend beyond the body's confinement, transgressing all limits and boundaries of the body. Rushdie clearly subscribes to this notion of transgression through grotesque realism, as evident from his notion of

excessiveness of Indian reality portrayed through his historiography. This sense of excess defies any attempt at confinement, both in historiography and body parts.

Saleem continually emphasizes his grotesque condition. Saleem's grotesque physical features are decribed in Midnight's Childrenas the following: "cucumber-nose stainface chinlessness horn-temples bandy-legs finger-loss monk's-tonsure" (MC345). When Saleem founds his Midnight's Children's Conference, he sends out visual messages of his face with friendly intention; however, his psychic self-portrait is deformed "as hideous as a portrait could be, featuring a wondrously enlarged nose, a completely non-existent chin and giant stains on each temple" (MC251).

The grotesque nature and physical deformities have their parallel in the body politic of the nation and currents of history. The grotesque growth and expansion of Saleem's body is a metaphor of the excessive, uncontainable nature of the Indian reality. Saleem's story acquires gargantuan proportion because "there are so many stories, too many, such as excess of intertwined lives"; "the raw unshaped material" (MC 199) he uses consists of "teeming multitudes" (MC 121). Saleem is a "swallower of lives" (MC 4), and he can sense the "consumed multitudes...jostling and shoving" inside him (MC 4). The India that he narrates is characterized by excessiveness. To retain his individuality amidst the overwhelming crowd, Saleem consciously tries to make himself grotesque because the grotesque is always distinguished from the others. Saleem tells us:

> If I seem a little bizarre, remember the wild profusion of my inheritance...perhaps, if one wishes to remain an individual in the midst of the teeming multitudes, one must make oneself grotesque. (MC 109)

The speed and scale of his enlargement is a point to this. Right from the time of his birth, we are not allowed to forget the fact of Saleem's grotesque nature; he adds to his deformities as he grows:

> Form the very first days I embarked upon an heroic programme of self enlargement... By mid-September I had drained my mother's not inconsiderable

> breasts of milk. A wet-nurse was briefly employed but she retreated, dried out as a desert only after a fortnight... I moved on to the bottle and downed vast quantities of the compound... I expanded almost visibly, enlarging day by day...Waste matter was evacuated copiously from the appropriate orifices; from my nose flowed a shining cascade of goo. Armies of handkerchiefs, regiments of nappies found their way into the large washing-chest of my mother's bathroom... (MC 124)

This is an excellent example of Bakhtin's grotesque body which is always unfinished, always in the making, and transgresses its own limits. T. N. Dhar says: "Saleem's grotesquerie is Rushdie's ploy for gifting him with extraordinary omniscience: for making him see, know, and report more than an ordinary mortal can, a substantial part of which is national history".[22] At one point, Saleem says that his life "has been transmuted into grotesquery by the irruption into it of history" (MC 57).

Descriptions of physical enlargement abound in Midnight's Children. Saleem says that Indians have the natural tendency of expanding or growing larger as they age (MC 294). Reverend Mother grows with alarming rapidity "until she resembled the Sankara Acharya mountain" (MC 311). From the time of his birth, Saleem grows with vertiginous speed. The healthy expanding baby Saleem reflects a generally healthy young Indiancontinent full of enthusiasm and promise after two centuries of foreign dominance. But as Saleem advances in years, and with him the young republic, all this promise and dreams begin to collapse; the cracks in the body politic leaving their marks on Saleem's body.

Saleem's grotesque double Shiva, a rat-faced youth with filed-down teeth, has two of the biggest knees the world has ever seen. His face is of "grotesque proportions" (MC 251). Saleem's son also fits the definition of protruding body in Bakhtinian grotesque realism. Like Saleem, he grows at an enormous speed; he is said to be "going to be bigbig: a real ten-chip whopper for sure" (MC 479). Saleem's son has grotesquely large ears. Saleem says that "elephantiasis" attacks his son in the ears instead of the nose. Both Saleem and his son's expanding bodies, Saleem's large nose, his son's large protruding ears, and Shiva's huge knees—all strive to embody the excess in historiography, and the bourgeoning Indian excessive reality. They are excessive contents that transcend the body confinement, and they indicate the futility of all-inclusive containment and any totalizing drive.

In Midnight's Children, Rushdie extensively employs the metaphor of the nose, skin, ear, and sight. One of the earliest body images to occur in the novel, one that becomes a recurring motif (among other leit-motifs) throughout the text, is that of the nose. One fine morning Aadam Aziz kneels down to pray and breaks his nose on the prayer mat. At the beginning of the novel Aadam Aziz is told by Tai the boatman that his protuberant nose is

> a nose to start a family on, my princeling. There'd be no mistaking whose brood they were. Mughal Emperors would have given their right hands for noses like that one. There are dynasties waiting inside it...like snot. (MC 14)

As Saleem grows up, he says "between my eyes, it [the nose] mushroomed outwards and downwards, as if all my expansionist forces, driven out of the rest of my body...my nose bloomed like a prize marrow" (MC 176). The nose helps both Aadam Aziz and his grandson Saleem to sense winds of change in the public sphere. The nose of Aadam Aziz begins to itch whenever something significant is about to happen. Saleem's sensitivity to historical events and changes is made possible by his telepathic sinuses which help him to smell dangers brought on by currents of history. This receptivity to history implicates his private participation in larger historical events:

> Nasal passages had started everything in my head.....nasal fluid had been sniffed upupup into somewhere-that-nose fluid shouldn't go....the connection had been made which released my voices. (MC 303)

Despite the ability of "sniffing-out-the-truth, of smelling-what-was-in-the-air, of following trails" (MC 307), "nose-given telepathy" does not help in surviving the relentless, destructive tide of history. The powerful smells of history draw him into the vortex of chaotic historical process. He becomes a plaything of history and ultimately he shatters completely. His power of nasal telepathy gets interrupted in a sinus operation at a crucial moment of history as India goes to war with China. Losing his nasal connection, he experiences silence, disaffection, disenchantment as India gets defeated in the hands of China.

In Midnight's Children, Saleem equates his olfactory ability to the craft of writing by saying "what is required for chutnification? ...above all a nose capable of discerning the hidden languages of what-must-be-pickled, its humors and messages and emotions" (MC 530). Images of grotesque bodies or body features in the novel are closely associated with Indian national history. The deformed body of Saleem connects him to the main currents of Indian history, and in this regard it is his nose that steers the narration.

Apart from the nose, the skin metaphor is also extensively used in the novel. The skin of Saleem is most affected by history and the relentless pressure of the crowd. Judith Halberstam says "Skin is at once the most fragile of boundaries and the most stable of signifiers,"[23] and in Saleem's case the skin signifies the collective and interconnected life of memory, hopes, fears, narratives, and the multitudes of the nation. The skin metaphor is used throughout to make sense of the changing socio-political complexities of the nation since independence. The story is also held together by "used skin of the metonymically proliferating life of the nation".[24]

As the story progresses, we see that the skin of Saleem's body is cracking, and this hysterical skin of Saleem mirrors the pathologies of the postcolonial nation. Sara Suleri, in The Rhetoric of English India, points out that Midnight's Children takes as its shaping narrative premise "the centrifugal divisibility that the idea of nationalism produces in the Indian subcontinent":

> Once the anachronistic idiom of religious difference is rendered coterminous with the rhetoric of independence, that narrative emerging from the curiosities of such historical conflation must pursue its most brilliantly literal query: what does it mean, for a populace to be born at the degree zero of its national history. In Midnight's Children ... such oddities of national chronology translate into infinite possibilities for further partition, so that the eros of nation cannot but represent, for the subcontinental psyche, a somewhat titillating induction into the idiom of perpetual separations, or the perpetual recuperation of loss.[25]

The fissured skin of Saleem is a metonym for the inevitable and internal divisibility of the nation. The cracking up of the protagonist's body parallels the rapid disintegration of the democratic, liberal ideology of the sub-continental narrative. Saleem says:

> Please believe that I am falling apart. I have begun to crack up like an old jug—that my poor body, singular, unlovely, buffeted by too much history, subjected to drainage above and drainage below, mutilated by doors, brained by spittoons, has started coming apart at the seams. In short, I am literally disintegrating, slowly for the moment. (MC 37)

The grotesque becoming or expansion of Saleem's body is a metonym for the excessive, uncontainable nature of Indian reality and identity. Against the official drive for containment and fixity, Saleem in his gargantuan growth and expansion celebrates the multitude, the crowd. If in his becoming, Saleem celebrates resistance, the cracking of his skin and final fission suggest that systems of power and history are also related to the body's unmaking.

Devoid of the telepathic connection Saleem, for the first time in his life discovers "the astonishing delights of possessing a sense of smell" (MC 306). After mastering the physical smells, Saleem experiences different kinds of smells, smell of emotions, predilections, and attitudes. It grants Saleem the "nasal freedom to inhale a very great deals more than the scents of purely physical origin with which the rest of the human race has chosen to be content" (MC 307). The time Saleem spends in Pakistan is one of intrigue, discord, and confusion. His senses of smell and taste make him experience an array of loathed flavours in the diseased reality of Pakistan, as he goes on ingesting "the birianis of dissension and the nargisi koftas of discord" (MC 330).

Apart from the three principal corporeal images of the nose, the ear, and the skin, Rushdie also employs the images of sight and taste in narrating the ongoing drama of a nation. Vision in Midnight's Children is always partial and faulty. Rushdie, in the novel, emphasizes that the history of the nation is full of holes and fragments; what is shown is simply not the complete picture. Saleem once says his narration is guided only by the memory of a "large white bed sheet with a roughly circular hole some seven inches in diameter cut into the center" (MC 4). By this perforated bed sheet, Saleem indicates that there is not a single perspective which can claim an all-compassing view for the variegated reality and not a standardized containment for the overwhelming excessive Indian content. Nancy E. Batty comments in "The Art of Suspense:

Rushdie's 1001 (Mid-) Nights" on Rushdie's narrative that it follows the viewpoint of a "perforated sheet, concealing the whole while revealing a part".[26]

Aadam is allowed to examine Naseem through a perforated sheet so that he could see only the supposedly afflicted parts of her body. The implication is that woman cannot be seen whole, but a more serious point being implied is that India can be seen, and understood, only in parts, in fragments. Rushdie implies that the excessive reality of India cannot be contained within a unified, concrete historiography. This partial accessibility of facts through vision is related to Rushdie's idea of historical truth. Rushdie himself, in Imaginary Homelands, speaks of himself as someone "forced by cultural displacementto accept the provisional nature of all truths, all certainties".[27]Rushdie, in the novel, attempts to represent a "plural history"[28] of India, where nothing is fixed, unitary, whole and complete; where truth is always partial, digressive, and in the process of transformation. Kumkum Sangari says that such a model "privileges faulty sight, peripheral or incomplete vision, limited perception, deliberate fallibility, and the splinter effect".[29]

The sense of taste is enumerated in the concept of 'chutnification' or pickling. Chutnification in the novel is "shorthand as it were for a postcolonial aesthetic judgement that accommodates diverse and conflicting multitudes".[30] The gastronomic metaphors become metaphors of history. "Pickle fumes...stimulate the juices of memory" (MC 166) and it is in the pickle factory that Saleem re-collects his life and the life of the nation and makes an attempt of "chutnification of history; the grand hope of the pickling of time!" (MC 459-60). Jean M. Kane says, "Just as Saleem is India, he is the chutney jar, the text, and the family, a chain of identifications that aligns each term with all the others".[31]

I. Allan Sealy's The Trotter Namaand Vikram Chandra's Red Earth and Pouring Rain also depict this excessive, gargantuan character of India by telling stories of epic proportion with intertwined lives and histories that defy the linear dictates of conventional historiography and the fixity of nationalist narratives. Here we encounter characters and stories that resist and mock the hegemonic urge to contain and privilege. The fluidity and carnivalesque dynamism of the body that we saw in Rushdie are also evident in these two texts. This corporeal fluidity is one way of subverting the fixity and restraining nature of nationalism and other hegemonic structures.

Like Saleem in Midnight's Children, Justin Trotter, the founder of the Trotter clan in India is a gargantuan figure with a voracious appetite for food. Unlike the later Anglo-Indians who did

not enjoy political power, the Great Trotter was a man of power who played crucial role in colonial power games. The later Anglo-Indians were insulted by the British and Indians alike for their dark skins and impure pedigree. But Justin Trotter suffered no such anxiety and even though he went native to a great extent, he was revered by the colonials. Sealy shows this man of power as a grotesquely large man in love of food. Men in power are characterized by a voracious appetite for food, for sex, and for material wealth; their big bellies serve as symbol of their status.

The first Trotter never had to confront the disturbing question of belonging in this new land, far away from Europe. He made his vast fortune and fell in love with India, and decided to spend his life here, despite retaining the colonialist's characteristic of exploitation and cruel financial exaction. As time passed and he had earned fortune and power, Justin Trotter tried to acquire Indian ways of life. Trying hard to become a native, he took to wearing Indian clothes and smoking hookah. But, though he was never ridiculed as being a half-caste, he himself knew all too well that he would never be able to become one of the natives, and all his efforts in this regard would go in vain: "Justin (who) had just decided that he could never, no matter how hard he tried, turn Indian (any more than he could revert to a European), and it was best if he were reconciled to the fact and became a third thing..." (TTN 195). Throughout the novel, Sealy emphasizes the hyphenated condition of these in-between people. Despite his growing hyphenated condition, Justin Trotter was perfectly at ease in his adopted country.

The process of neglect and dispossession that started with the Next Trotter branch, starting with Mik, had to do with the fact that they were country-born, had different skin complexion, and so they were not quite Europeans as to enjoy the privileges accorded to pure-blooded colonialists. Sealy shows how the contributions and achievements of the Anglo-Indians were ignored and relegated to the dustbins of history, and it is shown metaphorically in terms of missing, invisible bodies.

The predicament of the Anglo-Indian community had much to do with the way they looked—very unlike the Europeans, not quite like the natives, and the distinctive body of these people was a result of history. E. M. Collingham's book The Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj (2001) argues that the British experience of the Raj was intensely physical. The long history of the Raj and Englishman's constant and inescapable entanglement with all things Indian produced distinctively Anglo-Indian bodies that, despite their pretensions to a metropolitan "Britishness," were indelibly marked by their colonial Indian experiences.

According to Collingham, the Anglo-Indian bodies so constituted articulated the changes in the expression, manifestations, and strategies of British power in India from the nineteenth century to the end of British rule.[32] It can be inferred from such assumptions that the history of the Anglo-Indians, from their original glorious rise to their decline in the later part of the colonial period and in the postcolonial times can be read and understood in bodily terms or from the perspective of History's impact, effects and manipulations on the Anglo-Indian bodies.

The representative figure of the next generation of Trotters, Mik, starts getting blue in his skin during childhood, and he completely takes to the native ways. He has many grotesque adventures with native women and Sealy elaborately describes his sexual exploits and his blue male organ:

> There the boy and the half-Macedonian nymphets would sport, thrashing about from pool to pool... At the end of a year, these revels had turned the Second Trotter completely blue. The rest of his wild strong body now matched the blue spigot with which he had been born... (TTN 153-54).

Mik is even compared to Lord Krishna after he had left home to escape his father's stern measures: "...reports had already begun to trickle back to Sans Souci of blue revels and god-sightings at cowdusk by girls returning to their villages along the road to Calcutta" (TTN 156). Later Mik became a surveyor and travels to far places like Isphahan and Turin: "The blueness of his skin which had returned briefly in the snows had long since left him, so that the soles of his feet were yellow once more and the rest of his person (the monumental member apart) a dark khaki" (TTN 198).

He was a country born, and now he was turning into a complete native in colour. Mik's father, Justin, a colonial master himself, was not happy about his son looking increasingly like a native. He beat up the boy and restrained him from playing in the pools, but with no result. Justin was afraid that "If he grows any darker he will be invisible" (TTN 154). Of course, in due course, Mik became invisible to the British, because in spite of his loyal service to the British, he was never allowed to forget that he was a country born and dark-skinned, and so he would never be allowed to enjoy the privilege and power of a European. Because of his dark skin, Mik and

countless Anglo-Indians remained neglected, forgotten lives as the grotesque "Others" of the white colonial Europeans.

Just before Mik was to leave for India after his training in the Military Academy in England, the Court of Directors of the East India Company issued a resolution that "*no person the son of a Native Indian shall henceforth be appointed by this Court in employment in the Civil, Military or Marine services of the Company. Standing Order*". (TTN 201, Italics in original). This was, in sum, the content of the actual Minute of the Resolution taken on April 19, 1791. This was the beginning of Mik's further ordeal to come as a result of his being a country-born.

Mik would have lost his job there and then; but the major who was struck by Mik's potential as spy and soldier, intervened and convinced the authority by highlighting not only "the irrefrangible necessity of a khaki skin for British military espionage in India", but also the financial expense incurred on Mik's training (TTN 201). Finally, the financial consideration moved the Directors to relent, and Mik was allowed to proceed to India on sufferance. Mik had been taunted and jeered by fellow officers all the way back to India.

His stint under the British flag was ended by another order from the Governor-general in Council, Calcutta, Fort William, on the 21st of April, 1795. But Mik was not the only one suffering on account of this new order. It was an order that rendered many Anglo-Indian officers jobless, and turned them bitter against the British, under whom they had been serving until then. Mik had evidently a satisfying time serving the Maratha princes, but such satisfaction was short-lived. After a crucial battle against the East India Company (where Mik and his father the Great Trotter ranged on the opposite sides as enemies and Mik lost one of his hands from a wound by his father's cannon ball, described by Sealy in the manner of Firdausi's Sohrab and Rustam), Mik had to pay another big price for being a so called "half-caste" when a further warning The Governor-General in Council, Calcutta at Fort William ended his military under the Indian princes.

All through his military career, Mik had to contend with and suffer for this perception on the part of the British. The fact that he was a country-born haunted him for the rest of his life. Despite being a great soldier and showing all respect and passion for the regimented life Mik had to run from one camp to another as the British never trusted his colour of the skin. This pattern continued throughout history as we see the later generations of Trotters continuing to suffer for this.

Sealy brings out the complexity of the physical dimension by an intertextuality of Kipling's Kim and Mik. These examples show how Sealy intends to not only speak out but correct the abusé and wrongs done to the Anglo-Indian community by the pure-blooded, white skinned British. In other words, in Sealy's novel, the Anglo-Indians, maligned by imperialist Kipling and the British in general, body forth as a community of people that cannot be ignored because the very presence of this hybrid people problematize the concept of a unified unproblematic Indian identity. The dark body of the Anglo-Indian is also a mimic threat to the racial pride of the British colonialists.

In a section of The Trotter-Nama entitled *"Another Kahani"* (TTN 170-73) Sealy offers an alternative to the picaresque travels of Kim and his Lama in which Mik, rejected both by the Company and the Marathas alike, embarks on a "Little Game' (unlike Kipling's "Great Game") (TTN 172) in the company of an old Tibetan monk. Whereas Kim and the lama had travelled along the Grand Trunk Road, Mik and the monk travel along the coastal route from Calcutta to Madras, lighting fires as they go:

> Only towards the end did intelligence reports piece together a picture of the criminals' mode of operation: a boy neither dark nor fair would appear in the town's public offices asking if his father worked there. He would pass from one embarrassed firangi to the next and leave or be ejected. That night a fire would break out in the sonless offices... (TTN173).

What Sealy highlights here, in town after town, is the British denial of the hyphenated Anglo-Indians, their continued refusal to accept their mixed-blooded progeny as their own, while in Kipling's novel the "white" Kim is embraced by his father's old regiment.

In the second instance, the Indianized body features of Mik has been used by Sealy as a site of resistance to both the colonial racial pride and abuse, and the power of politics and history that tends to see bodies in a narrow stereotype gaze. Elizabeth Grosz has observed that depite being a site of knowledge-power and a target of control and constraint, the human body also exerts an unpredictable and powerful threat to codification and control. She calls such dynamic, resistant bodies "volatile bodies"—bodies who are not simply passive objects upon which

regimes of power are played out, but display capacity for protest and self-representation in alternate ways.[33]

Sealy displaces the authorial position of Kim by making Mik totally Indianized in his body features. While Kipling emphasises Kim's whiteness as a marker of racial superiority, Mik as an Anglo-Indian is of dark complexion. Mik is a grotesque product of history who poses challenge to the racial pride and exclusivist construction of identity of white Europeans. In celebrating and highlighting the corporeal differences of Mik and other Anglo-Indians from the colonial British, and at the same time in providing them a counter-canonical status in the novel, Sealy attempts to recuperate this colonised subject's body since it had been rendered insignificant, invisible, maimed, ignored—and to transform its signification and its subjectivity. The very fact that these other bodies exist as a result of historical turns of events, is a strong reminder that an oppositional embodiment are always at work which resist an "imposed, imperialist calculation of otherness".[34]

Vikram Chandra's novel Red Earth and Pouring Rain also presents us characters that defy the corporeal fixity and highlights the human spirit's refusal to be confined by its body. In this process, these excessive bodies resist the hegemonic desire to contain and classify bodies into neat, convenient categories. The human-monkey reincarnations and consciousness beyond death depicted in the novel are supreme instances of the fluidity of bodies. In the words of Upstone, such bodies "undermine any absolute categorization...a refusal to be hemmed in by conventional boundaries or limits reflected in a flexible, choric body".[35] At the same time, it must be remembered that, such transgressive bodies are marked with oppression, yet they display possibilities rather than trauma, as we have seen in the case of Anglo-Indian bodies like that of Mik and Queenie in The Trotter-Nama. These bodies are victims of historical events and trends. Saleem, Tai, Mik, the other Trotters, Sanjay—all of them are victims. Their grotesque condition is a result of historical suffering. In the novels of Mistry, Kesavan, Baldwin and Sahgal also we have such mutilated, sick, dying, mad bodies harried by history. But in most of the cases, these bodies, by going against the normative and imposed categorization, disrupts the high status of classical, ideal bodies, and offer an alternative perspective to history, power and the nation. We shall discuss these scarred, harried bodies later in the chapter.

As we have seen in the novels of Rushdie and Sealy, the bodies in Chandra's novel also keep changing and transforming themselves. They are always in the process of becoming. In the

previous chapter we discussed how these texts are re-defining Indian identity as plural, multiplicitous, and continually renewing itself against the dictate of narrow nationalism. In Chandra's novel this project of redefining identity as something that keeps changing is shown through nomadic bodies. In this regard Alexandru says:

> The process of redefining identity as a matter of becoming through figurations and mappings within changing boundaries determines changes in the body...[36]

Chandra's novel dramatizes the effects of colonization and the English language through corporeal images. It is through these images that a subversive agenda is offered by the narrative. Especially in the character of Sanjay, Chandra reveals the resentment for and contestation of the linguistic politics of the colonizers. Sanjay, though working for Markline, inserts hidden fonts to undermine the meaning of Markline's book. When he was about to be caught in his rebellious act, he swallows the metal fonts. Much later, during the Sepoy Mutiny, these metal fonts start falling from his body in the shape of letters which are used as hurling weapons by the rebel Indian soldiers. Sanjay understands the power of the English language as he realizes that it is through this that the British are conquering India. He is ready to pay the ultimate price to master the English language. When he loses all battles to defeat the British, he asks Yama, the god of Death to grant him immortality to be able to go on fighting and take revenge for all the humiliations, Yama asks for a terrible price. He says to Sanjay: "You will be everything you want. You will never die. But you must give me, now, the thing that is most holy to you" (REPN 442). Sanjay knows what that thing is and does not flinch:

> ...Sanjay reached up, opened his mouth and jammed his fist inside, caught his tongue which squirmed away, held it roughly and pulled it, tore it out by the roots and flung it at Yama wet with blood. This time the pain was too great and Sanjay fell unconscious to the ground (REPN 442).

This not only emphasizes the grotesque subversive body but also fluidity of the human body which allows the powerless to fight back against the forces of control and dominance.

Apart from the grotesque elements and carnivalesque celebration of corporeal fluidity and disruptive excessiveness, these novels also incorporate the other important Bakhtinian emphasis on lower bodily stratum. Bakhtin in Rabelais and His World relates human grotesque physical features to social and political conflicts. Inspired by the pervasive images from bodily lower stratums including intestines, urine, bleeding diarrhea, and excrements in François Rabelais' Garguntua and Pantagruel, Bakhtin scrutinizes the material acts related to the functions of bodily human functions such as eating, drinking, defecation, and copulations into cultural and artistic contexts.

Besides protruding parts, another important feature of the grotesque bodies is the plentiful open orifices such as the nostril, mouth, and anus. Those orifices serve as entrances (for foods and air) and exits (for excrements) and generate the new-born lives; they are all vital for the sustaining of life because the body will not be able to function properly without those orifices. They are where "the main events in the life...the acts of the bodily drama, take place"[37] and "passageways that ingest and communicate with the world".[38] Those open orifices are the places where the major events of life occur, such as the swallowing of foods and the defecation of excrements; therefore, open orifices are essential for vitality and nutrition to enter the body.

Clair Wills argues explains that Bakhtin emphasizes the openness in orifices of the grotesque body which has been steadily denied since the Renaissance.[39] The grotesque body with open orifices opposes the classic body which is smooth and finished, with all orifices of it closed and all attributes of the unfinished body being carefully removed. Ann Jefferson claims that the classic body aims at "sealing the body's orifices...smoothing out its convexities and moving it away from the thresholds at which the body either enters or leaves life" and it is also "sealed off both from the world which is its context and from other bodies".[40] The grotesque body provides a sharp contrast to the static ideal represented in classical Greek marbles. The classic body lacks life and energy because it lacks orifices and resists any change and newness.[41]

On the contrary, open orifices of the grotesque body render it "pregnant, abundant, procreative, and open to fertilization and conception".[42] Images of procreation, fertilization and conception showcase the sense of regeneration in Rushdie's historiography. Bakhtin says that "the grotesque body...is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body".[43]

In Midnight's Children we see the abundant use of the images of excrement, swallowing and of the mouth—an open orifice—all of which embody the regeneration of life. The image of mouth/swallowing is claimed by Bakhtin as related to death/birth at the same time.[44] He explains this ambiguous relationship by the hell image on the medieval morality play stage, incarnated as monstrous jaws by which old life is devoured while from it another new life looms. Therefore, the hell-gate incarnated by the jaw image on the stage "swallows up and gives birth" simultaneously.[45] Consequently, the mouth/swallowing image is linked to death and decay; it celebrates cycles of life and indicates eternal regeneration.

From the very beginning, Rushdie employs images of mouth/swallowing in Midnight's Children. According to Saleem, in the context of India, one cannot think of individual identity without referring to the crowd. This perception is linked to swallowing images when he says "to understand just one life, you have to swallow the world" (MC 121); the way Saleem understands things is by swallowing them.

The very act of narration and telling stories is linked to the image of eating and drinking in the novel. When Saleem tells his family stories, he says those stories have their "proper dietary laws," and he is supposed to "swallow and digest only the permitted parts of it;" however, Saleem wants to "flout the laws of halal [Muslim] to arrive at the unspeakable part," because deleting that part will "make the story less juicy" (MC 62). Stories are described as edible for readers. It is mentioned in chapter one that Saleem swallows stories from all folks in India then digests and reshapes them into his narration. The whole process of Saleem's writing is also the process of digestion and defecation.

Drinking, eating are swallowing are all related to the mouth image, an open orifice of the Bakhtinian grotesque body. Saleem constantly applies swallowing images to his perception in Midnight's Children:

> I [Saleem] am ingesting thumb-and-forefinger, swallowing the moment at which Aadam Aziz did not know whether he was Kashmiri or Indian; now I'm drinking Mercurochrome and stains the shape of hands which will recur in spilt betel-juice, and I'm gulping down Dyer, moustache and all. (MC 119)

Saleem loses his memory in the Sundarbans forest, but later regains parts of his memory when he is accidentally bitten by a transparent snake. He narrates his restored life stories to the soldiers and they "drink his life like leaf-tainted water" (MC 420).

Widely using mouth/swallowing images, Rushdie shows how grotesque bodies regenerate and procreate through open orifices. When Saleem is still a fetus in her mother's womb, he "feeds on" humming bird's "hum"; "fattening up on washing chest and the under-the-carpet love;" he "swallows Zulfikar's dream;" a marriage disintegrates and feeds him and his aunt's running away feeds him as well; all these events become his nutrition supporting his enlarging body and he swallows them all (MC 120). Bombay, though it looks like a hand, "it's really a mouth, always open, always hungry, swallowing food and talent from everywhere else in India" (MC 142).

Saleem's growth and expansion signify the ever-growing state of Indian reality. After Saleem digests so many stories, his body inevitably enlarges and finally approaches explosion into many minuscule particles as "history pours out of my [Saleem's] fissured body" (MC 37). The readers sense the burgeoning vitality and Indian regeneration in Midnight's Children from the images of the open orifices. Though Saleem's broken body reflects the conflicts, disruption, and chaos in the newly independent India, it still burgeons and revitalizes resiliently due to its regenerative nature.

After acts of swallowing (mouth/an open orifice/the entrance for food), internal body organs function following digestion and defecation; the images of anus/excrement (an open orifice/the exit for excrement) is brought out. In Rabelais and His World, Bakhtin eulogizes the obscene excrement as the catalysis that refreshes the world and he highly praises Rabelais' pervasive use of images of excrement, urine, and defecation. Bakhtin considers excrements like urine, dung etc. as "intermediates between earth and body;" after they are divided from bodies, they further nourish the soil and bring lives to the world.[46]

In Bakhtin's opinions, not only do excrements nourish and transform the soil and regenerate other lives but the demise of any life-form will definitely fertilize other lives, and it is fair to say they re-live again in other forms. He takes the killing of the giant Abel as an example of the first death to fertilize the earth with his blood in history; another example is Pantagruel's birth over his mother's death in Garguntua and Pantagruel when the mother is suffocated to death by her gigantic baby.[47] Death is fused with new birth—ending anticipate new beginnings; death

and death throes, labor and childbirth are intimately interwoven in excrement images in grotesque realism.

In Midnight's Children, Rushdie provides plentiful sensuous descriptions of odor and excrements. He describes the smell of urine and cow dung from the streets and slums. Rushdie mentioned that "India is a country with the smell and volume control turned up to the maximum".[48] Apart from providing familiar landscapes of Indian cities and villages, these scenes of odors and excrements bring vitality and spanking freshness into the new-born India because excrement nourishes creatures on the earth, regaining the power of reproduction. The excessive nature of the sounds, smells and sights of India gets reflected in Rushdie's historiography which always savors of the sense of excess.

The first excrement image is related to Padma, the "lotus goddess". The locals call her "The One Who Possesses Dung" (MC 20), and Saleem keeps calling her his "dung-lotus" (MC113). In one episode Saleem writes a brief paean praising the dung in an effort to console her who got upset due to Saleem's mockery of her name:

> Dung, that fertilizes and causes the crops to grow...which is patted into the chapatti-like cakes when still fresh and moist, and is sold to the village builders, who use it to secure and strengthen the walls of kachcha buildings made of mud. (MC 29)

Thus, dung strengthens buildings and fertilizes the nation and fosters growth with its regenerative force. Excrements refresh and renew, and it is Padma who with her earthy spirit and nourishment regenerates Saleem.Saleem's grotesque nose discerns "the odor of the street—overspiced, hot, dung-ladden odor;" (MC 361) and "tin-and-cratewood shack, where cockroaches [spawning] where rats [making] love, where flies [gorging] themselves on pie-clod dung" (MC 448).

After losing his memory, Saleem has an affair with a latrine girl, who has "a soul composed of pig-droppings" and "a tongue caked with excrement also" (MC 406). Another soldier Ayooba, with a crush on that girl, wants to take revenge on Saleem, thus he designs a trick of the electrified urinal—Saleem will be electrified when he urinates. In this episode, readers are shown a chain of images of genital organs and excrement which are crucial elements

in Bakhtinian grotesque bodies. They all perfectly support Rushdie's historiography in regenerative aspect with their proliferative connotations.

The last excrement image appears in the final chapter of the novel, "Abracadabra". Right before midnight of August fifteen, Saleem's planned wedding, a significant day for him, a man on the street abruptly "stops, squats, shits" in front of Saleem and produces "the longest turd" Saleem has ever seen—fifteen inches (MC 526-27). This episode may seem abrupt and irrelevant; however, examined under Bakhtinian study of excrement images, it unravels overtones of excrement: regeneration is brought to Saleem right in the night before his wedding, another new phase of life. At the end of the novel, this episode also anticipates a new phase of India—thus the excrement images in Midnight's Children imply regeneration and renewal. All excrement images from the beginning to the end of the novel anticipate an optimistic future of India with its regenerative force. Therefore, excrement as well as mouth/swallowing images related to open orifices of Bakhtinian grotesque bodies highlight the Indian sense of regeneration in Rushdie's historiography and the bursting energy in Midnight's Children.

The image of taste which is related to the process of eating is used by Rushdie to embody the volatility of historical meaning. The metaphor of pickling is of crucial significance in the novel. Saleem is a pickle factory worker at day and industrious writer at night, and he links his own writing to pickling, applying the art of altering taste and preserving foods to the writing of his autobiography. He describes chapters as pickle jars in the novel and he "hope[s] to immortalize in pickles as well as [what he does with] words;" thus words of his choice are pickled and preserved; Saleem literally bottles historiography in the form of chutney and pickle. Pickling involves with a finite number of ingredients producing an infinite variety of tastes. Saleem picks up stories and memories, introducing new characters and plots in writing his life and the history of the nation—just like the way he picks up ingredients in making his pickles and chutneys. During the process of pickling, changing of taste is a necessity, which is also manifest in Saleem's fictionalized historiography; Saleem thus says,

> I reconcile myself to the inevitable distortions of the pickling process...the art is to change the flavor in degree, but not in kind; and above all...to give shape and form (MC 531).

The changing of flavors in the process of pickling proves Saleem's historiography is always in the state of becoming, anticipating infinite possibilities. Historical meaning is unstable and open to any modification and accidental additions.

Most of the major events in Midnight's Children occur due to the mutilation or injury of Saleem's body or references to the bodily lower stratums. His nose, a container of mucus and an image from bodily lower stratum, is directly linked to the happening of some major historical events. His nose is hit by a spittoon which renders him amnesiac. Furthermore, the mutilation of his genital organ, another image from bodily lower stratum, makes him impotent and disconnects him from the responsibility of bearing the whole nation's history. What's more, the moment that Saleem first discovers his telepathic ability is when he hides himself in the washing chest and suddenly finds he is able to intrude his mother's mind. Saleem says at that moment "mucus rises higher than mucus is ever intended to rise," which is also related to the bodily lower stratum (MC 184). Thus we know Saleem's grotesque body and other body images or images from bodily lower stratums define his involvement with Indian national history.

It is a carnival reversal moving the conventionally upper body parts including brain, heart and soul to the bodily lower stratums such as defecation, copulation, pregnancy, and conception—it is an inversion of the hierarchy of upper and lower parts of the body. It is also a subversion of power by the lower classes, the powerless subalterns. This subversion through the open description of lower bodily stratum and images of excrement and obscene sexual images is also seen abundantly in novels like Such a Long Journeyand Looking through Glass.

In Rohinton Mistry's novel Such a Long Journey, we see the mass of marginal, poor, ordinary common men and women offering resistance, in their own grotesque ways, to the growing fascism of a corrupt state. The folk humour, shrewd skepticism and zest for life demonstrated by these people debunk the ideals of the brutal, annihilating nation-state. They see the pettiness of their leaders and understand the failure of the state in providing them the basic instruments of civic service and civil liberty. They also transform the crisis of the war into a carnival, debunking the operations of a ruthless realpolitik with their quotidian concerns of survival, food, drink and sex. The obscene, scatological jokes and corporeal imageries used by the characters in discussing the war and historical events show irreverence that has all the elements of Bakhtinian parody. Driven by the "lower bodily stratum", they reduce political grand rhetoric as well as history to absurdity through parody and burlesque.

Dinshawji's reductive account of the Cold War describes the CIA's "anus-fingering tactics" (SALJ 145) which provoke an Indo-Pak conflict and destabilize Indira Gandhi's power because America does not approve of her friendship with Russia:

> Makes Nixon shit, lying awake in bed and thinking about it. His house is white, but his pyjamas become brown every night". (SALJ145)

In another incisive political analysis he demands unabashedly:

> Where is *madder chod* America now? Not saying one word. Otherwise, if Russia even belches, America protests at the UN. Let Kosygin fart, and America moves a motion in the Security Council... No one cares because these are poor Bengalis. And the *chootia* Nixon, licking his way up into Pakistan's arsehole. (SALJ76)

The corporeal imageries in Mistry's novel are not just metaphors; they also become a means of literal protest also, as can be seen in the office peon Bhimsen's grotesquely comic account of children being made to defecate on newspaper pictures of Kissinger as part of the Indian proletariat's anti-imperialist propaganda (SALJ 299).

The character Peerbhoy Paanwala in the novel is a folk figure who is a teller of lurid, grotesque tales and the maker of aphrodisiacal *paans* like "*paalangtode*" which promise endless potency. He is described as having "wrinkled, old-woman dugs" which hung over a "loose-skinned belly equipped with a splendid ageless naval" (SALJ 175). During the war time, he tells lewd stories which are in fact complex political satires. These stories abound in images of open orifice, protruding body parts and vulgar sexual zest. He narrates the story of an ageing and impotent drunkard in the "West Wing" who tries out guns to revive his flagging sexual interest and sends out men to the "East Wing" to slaughter the Bengalis. The story ends with the triumphant intervention of the Indian army and the selling of the "patriotic paan".

The wall and the activities revolving around it are crucial elements in Such a Long Journey. Deepika Bahri writes:

> From Gustad's perspective, the wall offers a retreat from the maelstrom of a burgeoning and hostile metropolis seeking to reorganize the space of the city in

the name of development or in the majoritarian quest for a univocal identity by replacing colonial street names with nationalist ones.[49]

The wall also divides the hapless, dark underbelly of the city who does not figure in the master-plan of the modern metropolis. It also functions as a safeguard to the Noble family and other members of the Parsi community from the outside world. But this wall comes under attack as the government decides to push it further back to widen the street, and Gustad is apprehensive of this fact:

> The compound would shrink to less than half its present width and the black stone wall would loom like a mountain before the ground-floor tenants. More a prison camp than a building, all cooped up like sheep or chickens. With the road noise and nuisance so much closer. The flies, mosquitoes, the horrible stink, the bloody shameless people pissing, squatting alongside the wall. Late at night it became like a wholesale public latrine (SALJ 16).

The bodily deposits of the population bereft of public facilities and access to sanitation bespeak the abjection of the common men as well as the vacuity of the ideals of modernization and progress by the nation-state. But the common men and women in the novel display a subversive humour and carnivalesque zest for life that defies the failed reasons and corrupt ideals of the bourgeois nation which bring upon then more and more misery and abjection in the name of progress and modernity. The unmanageable mass of copulating, defecating, urinating proletariat mass continue to resist the operations of an evil, warring state with their bodies and the stubborn rhythm of unspectacular everyday living.

Images of excrement and other lower bodily stratum are also found in Looking through Glass. The raid on the Madhuban police station by a festive crowd of rebels during the feverish days of the Quit India Movement has all the elements of the grotesque comedy. In this scene, we see anti-imperialist fury expressed in abject corporeal terms. The rebels first assault the station with stones and slingshots, and later with a battering ram in the form of a small tree-trunk. But the plan of the battering ram backfires when two of the ram-bearers are shot by the British officer Niblick, and others are injured by it. After hours of indecisive and intermittent fighting, the

raiding party comes out, among other things, with a framed portrait of King George VI in full colour. Tojo who led the assault smashed the picture on the ground:

> Eunuchs, he bellowed as he stomped rhythmically on King George's upturned face, eunuchs...eunuchs...eunuchs...eunuchs. (LTG 114)

After that he pissed upon the picture. But he did not stop at that. He sits down in a squat as the rest of the crowd looks on in horror and disbelief "at this spare, stripped-down rendering of the nationalist project: a man in a dhoti shitting upon King George. But he didn't, quite, because...the main gate opened and Niblick appeared, squinting down the barrel of a rifle, the Empire's avenging angel. Tojo had gone too far" (LTG 115). Niblick tries to shoot Tojo for this heinous crime, but the breech of Niblick's rifle burst wounding his eye. Ultimately Tojo dies in police fire but not before he sends a terrible message to the Imperial order and dignity through his grotesque corporeal act: "Tojo died clutching his groin: someone avenged his king by shooting low" (LTG 116).

Images of excrement and lower bodily stratum are also found later in the novel when during the terrible days of partition riots and violence, the Ganjoo family, among hundreds of others took refuge inside the Old Fort. The sickness of the subcontinent got transferred to these unfortunate victims as they got entangled in the dark currents of history:

> The first thing anyone running through the gates seemed to do was find a bush or shielding outcrop and shit. It was as if they were expelling the last residue of the country they had fled...They shat so much and so often that they returned to the motherland the substance they had drawn from her. Many were buried in the fort and in them the new Republic lost nothing—they had paid their dues in full....There were others like us...who became constipated. We walked about pent up and farting, firing off little salutes to India or Pakistan or the not-quite dead Empire. The ones who were undecided about their loyalties developed stomach aches from the wind trapped inside. Masroor suffered particularly. (LTG361)

As two nations were taking births and were being celebrated by the leaders in eloquent terms, the people caught in the violence, and rootless and uncertain about their nationality and identity, could pay homage only in terms of excrement.

Sexual metaphor is used by Tharoor in The Great Indian Novelto depict the shared heritage of the postcolonial nation. He shows the mixed, hybrid lineage of India as born through the sexual union of blind Dhritarashtra (Nehru) and Lady Drewpad:

> No country whose colonists' imagination had created an Adela Quested and a Daphne Manners could have denied its seed to the most yielding of its vicereines. And so it happened; on the soft capacious bed of the private suite, within four posts of fragrant sandalwood, cushioned by the finest down ever stuffed by colonised fingers, my blind son of India took possession of all that Britannia had to offer him. And as the passion and the coolness of their coupling, the touch and the withdrawal of their contact, the tenderness and the rage of their caresses, mounted into a dizzying, tearing burst of final release, the fireworks burst white, saffron and green in Dhritarashtra's mind. Midnight exploded into dawn. He was free (TGIN 230).

Here Tharoor invokes the literary figures of Adela and Daphne, but the trope of rape has been transformed by a more peaceful, mutual sexual act. Through this sexual act Tharoor presents an alternative historical view of the British experience of India. Ralph Crane comments:

> The sexual act still takes place, and again between an English woman and an Indian man, but without, in Salman Rushdie's words, 'conjur[ing] up white society's fear of the darkie, of big brown cocks'. A shared history is not one which need necessarily be feared. The colonial process need not only be viewed as an assault, as the coupling of Dhritarashtra and Lady Drewpad demonstrates.[50]

In Vikram Chandra's novel Red Earth and Pouring Rain, images of lower bodily stratum are used to undermine power-structures. For example, in one scene Ram Mohan narrates from a play written by him involving the adventures of Alexander the Great in India. Here we see a naked Indian *sadhu* fearlessly confronting Alexander who wants to know why he is naked. The interpreter tells the *sadhu* that Alexander is the king of Kings because he has come all the way from Greece killing other kings. To this the *sadhu* calls him "Fool of Fools. Master-Clown of Clowns. Maha-Idiot of idiots" (REPN223). When Alexander wants to know what mystic path the *sadhu* follows to reach this "sublime state of indifference" (REPN223), the *sadhu* says: "When I

feel like shitting, I shit; when I feel like eating, I eat" (REPN224). Apparently, Alexander the Great does not like the answer and says (through the translator) that it is irresponsible of one to shit when one feels like shitting, and that "people who shit when they feel like shitting never do anything with their lives" (REPN224).

But the naked *sadhu* is not swayed by it and asks the translator to ask Alexander how often Alexander, the King of King, shits. The translator is awed by such impunity on the part of the *sadhu* and refuses to put that question because he says Alexander will get very upset and go on to kill all of them and many more people of the country. The *sadhu* diagnoses the root of Alexander's problem thus:

> O-ho. I thought he looked constipated the moment I saw him....Tell him that's probably why he's impelled to invade other nations and massacre tribes and all that—any student of yoga will tell you that mistreating the body leads to mental disaster. Yogic science has shown that people who hold it in are inescapably driven to behaviour like running about slashing at people, besieging towns, and frivolous acts of bravery...He'd be a lot better off if he shat more often. I wonder what his per week rate is...Get this fellow shitting right and he'd probably go home, quiet as a lamb (REPN 224-225).

In the context of the novel, this scene, with its images of excrement, is directed at revealing and subverting the brutality of the British conquest of India. The play from which this scene was narrated by Ram Mohan was performed in front of a British audience in the court of Skinner. But this scene was edited out of the play during the performance because according to Skinner, this was "incompatible with the dignity of the court" (REPN 222).

Thus, it has been seen that the grotesque realism and grotesque, excessive bodies in the novels not only depict the nation's essential non-fixity and ever-evolving character but also subvert the will to dominance and repression by the structures of power. In the following section, we will examine how the national system or similar structures of power dominate some bodies on the basis of the way they look like and the ways they behave.

II.

The body has been redefined by the claim that it is not only a natural reality, but also a cultural concept: a means of encoding a society's values (customs, beliefs, oppressions, cruelty, histories) through its shape, size and ornamental attributes. "The body is...both an object represented...and an organism that is organized to represent concepts and desires".[51] A culture constructs meanings and its subject-positions through structures of signification with pervasive use of images of the body. All societies create images of the ideal body to define themselves: social identities have a lot to do with how we perceive our own and other people's bodies. This may explain why different cultures have regularly tried, through a variety of laws and rituals, to delimit the body: to erect clear boundaries around it. We have seen this process in Sealy and Chandra in the case of the Anglo-Indian bodies. Now we discuss Kesavan and Baldwin's novel and other partition narratives. This section will examine how some bodies are regarded as normative while others are marginalized and unrecognized due to their differences—the sick, disabled, feminine bodies—who remain on the periphery of the system as the "Others" of the normal bodies. We shall also see how structures of power attempt to contain and frame some bodies as "others" in order to maintain and perpetuate dominance over them.

The fact that the body is often a site or a visual marker of identity is explored in Sealy's novel The Trotter-Nama. It is already discussed how the Anglo-Indians were marginalized by the British because of their dark skins. People like Mik, the second generation of native-born were given the insulted label of "half-caste" and they were denied of the privileges and rights despite their loyal and dedicated service to the British imperial mission. Sealy employs the trope of 'invisibility' to depict the predicament of the Anglo-Indian community. Justin, the first Trotter, enjoyed respect and power because he was a pure European. But his son Mik was a country-born with dark skin. Mik's skin got darker and darker as he advanced in to youth. Justin Trotter was afraid that if he gets any more dark, Mik would become invisible. What Trotter meant was that the British would refuse to see him as one of their own rank because of his dark skin.

The theme of invisibility is further employed by Sealy with regard to Thomas Henry Trotter who takes active part and ultimately wins the Victoria Cross for his courageous service during the long, bloody siege of Lucknow in 1847. In a painting commemorating this siege of the Residency, the figure of Thomas Henry Trotter remains in the sideline as a grey blur which

symbolizes how the British refused to acknowledge the service of the Anglo-Indians during the Mutiny. In spite of the dispossession and deprivation of rights and privileges, Mik fights valiantly alongside the British in crushing the Mutiny, and one such battle he loses one of his hands. The questions of embodiment and the politics of visibility are most powerfully treated by Kesavan in his novel Looking Through Glass.

Kesavan's novel Looking Through Glass reveals that binary categories not just of male/female or white/black, but of Hindu/Muslim, patriot/enemy, are also historically and ideologically conditioned. In a particular historical setting and under a prevalent political discourse it so happens that how people look and are seen determine for others and themselves what they are. Kesavan's novel is concerned with the marginalization and "erasure" of the body of the Muslim nationalist during the high time of Indian freedom struggle under the aegis of Indian National Congress.

Looking Through Glassis a text where history is presented in revisionist and corporeal terms. The politics of seeing, and the question of historical visibility of the body of a certain class or community of people that we witnessed in Sealy'sThe Trotter-Nama, can be seen in Kesavan's novel, too. In Looking Through Glass, we have a narrator who is a photographer and he is experiencing the history of the time by "looking through glass" literally, through his camera lens. Through this strategy, the novelist emphasizes the "drive to see" embedded in historical inquiry.

The question of embodiment is essentially related to agency. Looking through Glass represents the issues of embodiment, and the dynamics of physical visibility and invisibility while dealing with the complex and controversial question of nationalist agency or identity. The novel chronicles the ways in which the discourse of Indian nationalism has snapped the Muslim body into a stereotype, something that can never be a true nationalist, and is made to remain "invisible" from the mainstream, Hindutva-ridden Congress nationalistic ideology. Kesavan engages this politics of visibility/invisibility by way of an investigation of post-1940s Indian nationalism which projected the crisis of nationalist agency (immanent in the event of the partition in 1947) on to the figure of the "Muslim separatist" or the "enemy within".

It was the timing and tone of the Quit India movement that constructed the invisibility of the Muslim nationalists such as Masroor "who believed in the Congress and its dream of India, free and united, and for whom it was critical that the Congress continued to believe in him" (LTG 247). It is also this historic event and its rhetoric of excessive, biased, and rigidly Hindu

nationalism that made for the disappearance or the constructed invisibility of three nationalists, Masroor (the Congress Muslim nationalist), Dadi (the narrator's grandmother and social worker), and Parwana (the orphan girl who becomes the victim of Gyanendra's film script, "Kamasutra").

It is this predicament of being hypervisible to the Hindus and to the British, while at the same time that he is invisible as a Muslim body to the Congress party (the party that has the power to set the agenda for nationalism), that Masroor knows too well:

> Eighty...million Muslims. This is the truth, the government's own truth-printed, bounded, and published. But for us the Muslims, the whole truth is that there are eighty million Musalmans in this country who are invisible...Not invisible to everyone. Not to the British who count us. Not to those Hindus who hate us, who see us everywhere-circumcised monsters who bathe once a year and breed all the time. It is the Congress which can't see us...It first bleaches us with its secularism till we are transparent and then walks through us, as you and I walk through finns and ghosts...When we're for it, we're human beings, transparent in our humanity. When we are against it, we still aren't Muslims, because then we are feudal or bourgeois, some abstract sort of anti-social villain. (LTG 190)

The disappearances of Muslim nationalists like Masroor whose disappearances are symptomatic of the constructed erasure by the dominant Congress nationalism. Kesavan depicts this grotesque drama very effectively in the novel. A mere glance at the headlines of the August 9 newspaper is enough to make Masroor invisible. One moment Masroor is on his knees, "reading on all fours this confirmation of everything he feared" (LTG 46), and the next moment, the narrator sees him disappear into a military lorry hurtling down the road. Masroor has literally vanished into invisibility. As the truck picks up speed, the narrator finds Masroor's image flattened on a recruiting poster painted on the side of the truck; "Take the King's Commission: The Noblest Life on Earth" (LTG 47).

As if to fulfill the nationalist imaginary in which there is no Hindu-Muslim problem (read "the Muslim problem"), the Congress Muslims, in proportion to their involvement in the Congress pact, literally disappear. This mass disappearance marks the strong presence of

communalist elements in Congress nationalism which refused to "see" the point of view or the anxiety of loyal Muslim nationalists in the wake of the passing of the Quit India Resolution:

> The degree of disappearance was in inverse proportion to the victim's commitment to the Congress. Some just became lighter skinned which they didn't mind. Others, more involved with the party, sometimes became translucent. With Inayat Sahib, a veteran of the great Khilafat campaign, who had grown away from the Congress after the Kanpur riot, the most that happened was during a meeting of the Municipal Board he found himself completely naked in the middle of an argument...The more committed they were, the less they left behind. One just left his name behind in the novel he had been reading when he heard the news. He had been reading Forster and when they found the book by the empty armchair, Aziz had become Salman on every page...His brother Saleem had been subbing the late city edition when the news came down the wire ... he was translated into the left-hand corner of the day's cartoon, just under the last fold of the Mahatma's loincloth" (LTG 248).

These erased bodies regain their materiality only after the wave of Quit India Movement dies down. To make his presence felt to the Congress, Masroor takes on the appearance of a typical Muslim, because he comes to realize that the Congress can see him only as a Muslim, and never as a Muslim nationalist. In an attempt to countering the symptomatic invisibility to the Muslim body, Masroor takes on the simplified image of a Muslim—"a beard, skullcap, and a lungi" (LTG 191):

> Since the Congress loves simple ideas like Freedom and Masses, Muslim must simplify themselves. Since our problem is transparency, we must become opaque in the name of Islam. Even here, in a mosque, I can see Muslims dressed like civilians—but remember they cannot see you in these clothes. So burn your shirts and trousers and grow your beards... Force the Congress to look you in your beards and burquas... because only then will they know we are here. Only then will they see. (LTG 191)

It becomes apparent that what we see, what is immediately visible determines what we think of what we see. In other words, the body has a terrifying visibility and materiality that cannot be escaped. Masroor's masquerading of Muslim embodiment has its parallel in Hassan's story, and this story sheds further light on the concept of the immediate transparency of the body and corporeal identity. Hassan was a Hindu Brahmin and made his living by selling banana chips and pickles in Calicut. He felt compelled to make for himself a new identity, the cut-out image of a Muslim to be safe because a rumor was spreading that "British garrisons were put to flight by mobs of rampaging Muslims" (LTG 82). So he cross-dressed as a Muslim and designed for himself a beard, wore a small lace cap and assumed another name, Ali Musaliar. But one day, as he stops at a Brahmin Hindu eating place he is beaten up and brutalized by the cook and other Hindu customers. In spite of his being a Hindu, the attackers assumed Hassan to be a Muslim as he had all the "markings" of a Muslim on his body:

> Someone kicked my jaw and then another temple. I must have stayed semi-conscious because I can remember the others closing in around me and kicking me in the ribs a few times... Someone shouted cut it off, cut it off and another laughed and someone else said no... and then the terrible line of fire and pain spread across my chest...They had etched him with the logo of their faith. This swastika. In the weeks of pain that it took for the scabs to form properly, he often wished they had lifted lis lungi and looked. And seeing that he was already a member of their flock, that further markings would be redundant. But it was his fault that he'd been mistaken for a Muslim. The initial markings had been his... He had simplified himself into a cut-out Muslim. The cook had simply gone by appearance (LTG 84-85).

Since Hassan is a Hindu, he is not circumcised, and so he is "already a member of their (Hindu) flock". But his tormentors could not see it, and Hassan's body is brutalized because his embodiment as a Muslim is immediately transparent. To his tormentors, only his Muslim "body" is self-evidently transparent and intelligible, as only the Muslim-ness of Masroor is intelligible or visible to the Congressmen. Hassan's brutalization is not historically related to Masroor's

predicament. Hassan's story is set in the year 1920, while Masroor's invisibility occurs in the year of the Quit India Resolution. Moreover, Masroor's corporeal predicament is more resonant with history.

The predicament of Muslim nationalists like Masroor must be seen in the context of the troubled relations between Congress nationalism and the nationalism of the Muslim League in the years before the independence and partition. Masroor decides to look like the usual notion of a Muslim because it was the only way he could be visible to the overtly Hindu Congress party. The story of Masroor's invisibility and his conscious effort to look like a typical Muslim and the story of Hassan's brutalization reveal "the politics of seeing and the annihilation of political subjectivity that results from it".[52]

Kesavan's novel is a powerful critique of the overtly male, Hindu-centric version of nationalism as practiced by communalist organizations such as the RSS. This male-dominated Hindu nationalism built their nationalist narratives on the body-building programs in the akharas and concept of *anushilan* as a metaphor for celibacy, discipline, control, spirituality, and masculinity. Milind Wakankar points out that the reforming of the male body was projected as a necessity for the rejuvenation of the (Hindu) nation itself in the face of centuries of Muslim and British oppression. This body was to serve as a link between culture and power, between an aesthetics and politics, and between what was after all a Hindu-elitist program for national-cultural regeneration and the dispersed Hindu national-popular itself.[53] Through such nationalist program of anushilan, and the process of "bodying forth" from the akhara culture, the Hindu-centric male-oriented nationalism sought to purge the Hindu body of all that was considered representative of the male Muslim body: proselytizing, lustful, perfidious, unpatriotic, and alien.

Looking Through Glass makes this critique of this version of nationalism by framing the Akhara culture and its culture of stoicism, manliness, virility, and discipline, within the logic of the Kama Sutra culture which is here connected to rape. This critique is presented through the story of rape of Parwana, a major protagonist in the novel. Parwana, an orphan girl and actress, rescued and given shelter by Gyanendra, one of the gurus at the Pant Ram ka Akhara, is forced into playing the role of a desiring femme fatal in a cinematic enactment of the Kama Sutra. But during the shooting, Parwana is raped by Chaubey, the hero of the film and a body-builder in the akhara. The narrator had to man the camera during the shooting. It is only belatedly that he

realizes his complicity in the violence on Parwana's body. Kesavan drives home the point that while the akhara culture insists on the purging of the Hindu body and spirit by celebrating celibacy and sexual restraint (as against the over sexual, lustful Muslim "other"), it is nonetheless immersed in the traffic in women and lust and rape. Challakere connects the story of the rape of Parwana with the historical problem of the Hindu-Muslim unity during the crucial year of the Quit India Resolution:

> By imagining nationalist agency as masculine, stoical and pure, the Akhara culture hopes to suspend the body itself which it associates with the unassimilable feminized and hypersexualized other. This puts us in mind of the Quit India resolution and its hope that the attainment of immediate independence would, by itself, suspend the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity.[54]

Frantz Fanon argues that Othering occurs on the basis of physical and verbal difference.[55] To that end, narrative desire—the impulse to tell stories—"underlies the ways we construct the so-called normal and the aberrant, and the ways we explain the disjunctions between the two".[56] Similarly, Judith Butler writes that "the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside".[57] The idea that we can only conceive of normalcy by conceiving of its opposite: deviance. And in traditional readings, the colonized body has been that abjected outsideagainst which the British body—civilized, civilizing, and normal—is constituted, at both a cultural and a more literal level.[58]

Most of the time, this constitution of the abjected outside is part of what Alexander and Mohanty call a "citizenship machinery which excludes and marginalizes particular constituencies on the basis of their difference".[59] It is through an embodied politics of exclusion and marginalization that some people and communities are made to remain as the "others" in a national system, as evident in the case of Sealy's Anglo-Indians and Kesavan's Muslim nationalists.

In Such a Long Journey by Mistry we can see this process of "Othering" on the basis of corporeality. The Parsi community in Mistry's novel, like the Anglo-Indians, remains outside the

hegemonic construction of national identity. Discussing the fate of the Parsis in the city of Bombay, Chakrabarti and Ganguly write:

> Never integrated in the formal 'master-plan' of the metropolis it is the unacknowledged but indispensable dark underbelly of the city, its grotesque 'other.' The inhabitants of this 'unintended city' are obsolete citizen, the masses who provide cheap labour...[60]

The Parsi community in the novel lives isolated lives threatened by the growing fundamentalism in the city of Bombay. Gustad and other Parsis are apprehensive and sad about the fact that streets are re-named and Hindu right-wing parties are destroying the plural culture of the city. As in the time of the Partition, the nation is seen to be getting segregated and invisible boundaries are being drawn between people and communities. It is as if the nation is trying to consolidate and maintain its national identity by a process of "differentiation and displacement—the differentiation of the national [us] from aliens within and without".[61]

But the carnivalesque presence of the grotesque body of the "Other" is itself a disruptive act of resistance. The grotesque bodies of the Muslim nationalists and the Anglo-Indians do not disappear despite the oppression of hegemonic power. In these texts the subversive agency of the grotesque body cannot be missed. The grotesque figures in these novels enact what Bakhtin calls a "gay relativity", elicitingan insistent sense of comedy, caricature, parody, or carnival irony which often gives them some agency despite their oppressions.[62]

The deployment of the carnivalesque can be read as an attempt at recuperating lost, suppressed, invisible, ignored subjectivities by dismantling constructions of the docile (colonized/oppressed) body in favour of an "unruly body that always threatens to loosen institutionalized authority's grasp on representation".[63] In other words, the carnivalesque foregrounds an element of resistance on the part of those figures who have been victims at the hands of history by dismantling the hierarchized corpus of the dominant/imperial culture without simply perpetuating the victim/victimizer cycle. Despite the rejection by the British and the long history of marginalization and erasure at the hands of history, the Anglo-Indians have remained and the very presence of these "other" bodies disrupts the monologic narratives of a unitary Indian identity.

The common men and women in Rohinton Mistry's Such a Long Journey stage such a disruptive, carnivalesque act by the collective protest march against the apathy of political authorities. In their struggle to survive and assert human needs, these poor people forge solidarities and relationships across class boundaries. Mistry describes the grotesque appearances of these people as they march in protest:

> All manner of vendors and tradespeople, who had nothing in common except acommon enemy were waiting to march. There mechanics and shopkeepers,indefatigable restaurant waiters, swaggering tyre retreaders, hunch-shouldered radio repairers, bow-legged tailors, shifty transistors-for-vasectomies salesman, cross-eyed chemists, sallow cinema ushers, hoarse-voiced lottery ticket sellers, squat clothiers, accommodating women from the House of Cages. (SALJ 312)

This joyous, carnivalesque crowd enacts an act of resistance, though it is not something revolutionary, and ultimately, it is crushed by the police. Though small and feeble, such acts of resistance nonetheless threaten the logic of authority, and therefore they are sought to be contained, punished and broken. Elleke Boehmer elaborates:

> The seductive and/or repulsive qualities of the wild or 'Other', and the punishment of the same, are figured on the body, and as body. To rehearse some of the well-known binary tropes of postcolonial discourse, opposed to the colonizer (white man, West, center of intellection, of control), the 'Other' is cast as corporeal, carnai, untamed, instinctual, raw, and therefore also open to mastery, available for use, for husbandry, for numbering, branding, cataloguing, description or possession.[64]

In the next section we shall look at the ways in which disruptive, unruly bodies—bodies that threaten the hegemonic structures of power—are broken, tortured and branded.

This "othering" process through which dominant narratives cast some bodies as normal/desirable and others are marginalized and kept outside the narrative of nation and history

is also seen in the ways sick and disabled bodies are represented. Recently, postcolonial scholars have turned their attention to the issue of disability—both physical and mental—and the ways in which disabled and sick bodies suffer oppression and marginalization. The disabled bodies provide one such difference against which an able, total national body is defined. The homogeneous nation is identified with normalcy and well-regulated selves and bodies. In such a scenario, each body with disability is a threat to the well-regulated nation "bodies out of bounds are understood to have the potential to undermine the project of nationalism".[65]

In Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines, the grandmother holds a rather aggressive notion of nationalism based on ideas of protection and self-definition against enemies across the borders. Her idea of nationalism collided with the cosmopolitan world-view of Tridib who did not believe in the temporality and fixity imposed by borders and boundaries. Tridib, in the eyes of the grandmother, was a wastrel and he did not fit in her idea of a good citizen of the nation. Her views of nationalism were constructed around bodily terms. For example, she says "you can't build a strong country without building a strong body" (TSL 8). She shows distrust to Tridib's behavior and ways of life (and ideologically his view of nationalism) because he suffers from dyspepsia.

In Siddhartha Deb's novel The Point of Return, we see Dr. Dam is paralyzed after being assaulted by the tribal mob during times of ethnic conflicts in the hill town. His disabled body can be seen as a metonymfor his failure to get integrated into the map of the nation even after the long dedicated service he has given to the state. He and countless others like him have remained marginalized, forever carrying the label of a foreigner in the postcolonial nation. In a hegemonic national paradigm bodies with disabilities and sickness are projected as the "Others".[66] Deb's novel is a meditation on the search for home and belonging. But people like Dam have never found a home and are forced to stay out of the system.

In Mistry's Such a Long Journey Tehmul's decaying mind and body throughout the narrative function as a literal manifestation of Gustad's psyche and the state of the nation. Tehmul, a seemingly unimportant and mentally disabled character, is essential in Gustad's life, as he brings out the tender side of him and represents the innocence of life. Tehmul represents both Gustad's damnation and his salvation. Like Gustad, Tehmul has a hip injury, but while Gustad's accident left only a limp, Tehmul is physically and mentally crippled. Gustad sees Tehmul as a more unfortunate version of himself, so he treats Tehmul like a son and with gentleness. Gustad

and Tehmul's lives parallel each other in their respective secret dealings. Bilimoria involves Gustad, against his will, in a Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) plot designed by the crooked Indira Gandhi, while Gustad's wife Dilnavaz, and her reclusive friend, Miss Kutpitia, initiate the innocent Tehmul in their dangerous, superstitious rites.

Tehmul with both physical and intellectual disabilities is portrayed as a passive victim of exploitation. He is used as a receptacle for spells to reverse the ill-fortunes plaguing the protagonist Gustad's household. Ms Kutpitia, the local herbalist in the novel, has few scruples in casting the spell on Tehmul. She convinces Gustad's reluctant wife by saying:

> How much brain does he have to begin with [...] so what difference will it make [...] Tehmul himself will not notice anything. What I say is that we should be happy that for the first time he will do something good for another person (SALJ 110).

People like Tehmul are not only expendable for normal people but later he dies for others. Tehmul, like Tridib in The Shadow Lines becomes the ritual sacrifice for the angry crowd. Tehmul, in his death becomes the innocent victim on the altar of national chaos. In his death, Tehmul unwittingly becomes the agent of Gustad's salvation. Just as Bilimoria carried Gustad to Dr. Bonesetter's clinic, after his accident, Gustad conveys Tehmul to his deathbed and prays and cries over his broken body. Tehmul's tragedy dissolves Gustad's disappointment and sorrow, all of which Tehmul embodied but which seem inconsequential in the light of Tehmul's death. Gustad's tears cleanse and signify rebirth, and he reconciles to his rebellious son Sohrab. Thus, at the end of the novel, Gustad removes the blackout paper from the windows and allows sunlight into his house for the first time in many years.

Anita Desai's Clear Light of Day narrates Partition and its aftermath from the perspective of a cast of misfit characters—an autistic man, his eccentric sister, and the unmarried siblings of a once genteel, now impoverished Hindu family. The particular nature of the characters' oddities conveys metonymically the sterile, residual nature of Old Delhi where time seems not to have moved after Partition. In the novel, Anita Desai explores the ambivalent roleof characters with disabilities, both as sites of transgression and as repositoriesfor cultural tensions in a postcolonial world. It is through the character Baba, the man with developmental disability, and through his

body, his silences and ghastly presence, and his interactions and complex relationship with others, that a negotiation is being sought between the old and new India.[67]

Sick and disabled bodies are sites of historical chaos and paradoxes. In Midnight Children, for example, during the first nine years after independence, the skin of businessmen in India attaching to Western ideology or styles of living literally turn white, which according to Saleem is the "the outward expression of the internationalism" (MC 45). The skin of Saleem's father, Ahmed Sinai turns pale—a condition that signifies his craving for British life style and his inability to attain complete whiteness of the British. He is an example of westernized native and a victim of confusing in-betweenness.

Dr. Aziz is another example of a westernized native intellectual, who embodies cultural conflicts and the impossible reconciliation between the colonizing British and the colonized India. Dr. Aziz is relentlessly tortured by a hole in his body signifying his religious uncertainty, also a symbol of failing to identify with neither the East nor the West. Abdulrazak Gurnah claims the hole in Dr. Aziz's body is a "metaphorical and physical location of unsettling knowledge whose outcome is division and doubt".[68] The pigmentation disorder among Indian businessmen and Aziz's hole both reveal the non-integrated identity under the clash between two cultures or religions in the modern history of India. Bodies are the epitome of the unresolved clash of incompatibles; they and history in Midnight's Children are in this way inseparable and connected.

In Tharoor's novel The Great Indian Novel, "Draupadi is emblematic of Indian democracy, her attempted disrobing a symbol of what was sought to be done to democracy not so long ago".[69] While Yudhistir is Morarji Desai, Arjun, Bhim, Nakul, and Sahadev are conceived as embodiments of the institutions of the press, army, bureaucracy, and Foreign Service respectively, meant to keep democracy in good health. "Draupadi in The Great Indian Novel expresses in her own body the post-independence turmoil of India, its symbolic changes in fortune, as she oscillates between sickness and health".[70] During Nehru's tenure her health remained more or less stable. But it becomes utterly sick during the time of Indira Gandhi.

To depict the political chaos in the life of nations, Mistry brings in metaphors of sickness and medicines in Such a Long Journey. Dr. Paymaster, the irrepressible physician in the novel,

compulsively uses images of a diseased body to discuss the plight of Bangladesh (East Pakistan during that time):

> East Pakistan is suffering from a diarrhea of death...attacked by a strong virus from West Pakistan, too powerful for the Eastern immune system. And the world's biggest physician is doing nothing. Worse, Dr. America is helping the virus... Only the complete, intravenous injection of the Indian Army will defeat the virus. (SALJ164-5)

The grotesque medical metaphors, along with the sexual images used by Dinshawji and Peerbhoy Paanwala give us a carnivalesque, subversive picture of global and national politics around the India-Pakistan war of 1971. Roshan's sickness in the novel worsens as the domestic life of the Noble family and national events slide into further chaos: Gustad receives threat over money and the clouds of war darken over the country.

In Mukul Kesavan's novel Looking through Glass we have images of sickness which metaphorize the sickness of the nation. Dadi internalizes the guilt about her non-participation in the Quit India movement and finds that she cannot rid herself of the memory of 1942. When the government of India awards her a "Freedom Fighter" citation for her contribution to the Indian independence struggle, her suffering becomes even more acute. Even though Dadi was jailed in the 1932 nationalist movement (the salt satygraha), she is so burdened with a sense of guilt about not participating in the "real" struggle for independence—the Quit India movement of 1942—that the pension award for doing so makes her virtually disappear. This sense of guilt, a consequence of history of a volatile time shows its effect on her body also:

> I thought she was being silly, but the guilt consumed her. Every month I found her thinner and more obsessed than before... Dadi never spoke of what she actually did in '42, of her children, her husband, their life together. The August rebellion became a black hole in her memory that sucked everything that ever happened to her afterwards, that collapsed her entire life into a single non-event. (LTG 5-6)

The theme of sickness is brought in the novel to illustrate the ills besetting the nation and body-politic during the volatile years just preceding independence and the Partition. Independence brought sickness to those people who were victims of the riots and communal violence, preceding and immediately following the Partition.

The politics of visibility, embodiment and "othering" on corporeal terms are closely allied to the logic of hegemonic perpetuation of oppression and dominance. Bodies are sites where power writes terrible messages. History and its train of traumatic events leave their marks on human bodies. In the next section, we shall examine how the novels depict the violence of history as inscribed on bodies by employing images of wounding and markings. With regard to the novels on the Partition, it will be seen that map inscription was often asserted as violent bodily inscription. It is through such violent images of torture and physical violation that these texts attempt to make sense of colonial and postcolonial historical trauma and burden.

III.

Images of wounding, torture and assaults are abundantly employed by the writers to display the violence and brutality of history and the nation-state's politics of domination and control. The following section attempts to chart the tortured, wounded, brutalized bodies in the novels. It will be seen that the body is often the text on which power structures and history write their violent effects. Elleke Boehmer writes:

> The silenced, wounded body of the colonized is a pervasive figure in colonial and postcolonial discourses, but its valencies differ significantly. In the process of postcolonial rewriting the trope of the dumb, oppressed body undergoes significant translations.[71]

Saleem's body suffers multiple injuries and mutilation, and almost every major events in the novel occur due to the mutilation or injury of his body. Saleem's body is deformed under the disturbance of Indian history.The first mutilation of Saleem's body occurs when his geography teacher pulls off his hair and makes him bald permanently; the second one is the cut of his mid-finger followed by the blood test revealing his false parentage, resulting in his first exile to his

uncle's house. Other events include his being hit by the silver spittoon. His body in Midnight's Children splits, disintegrates, and cracks due to the unbearable burden of history of a nation; it is the site where conflicts of history and ideology are inscribed. Led by his nose, Saleem explores odours of history in the novel with it and his body functions as the foundation of his narration. Grotesque bodies destroyed and deformed by violence in Midnight's Children are thus crucial for the understanding of Rushdie's historiography.

In Vikram Chandra's novel Red Earth and Pouring Rain we have the character Sarthey, a protagonist in a detective story who is an Englishman with a dubious past. This character is a projection of Sanjay's more complex act of investigation into the meanings of the world, and is also a metaphor of the shock of history, represented by the British rule. One gruesome incident involves Sarthey cutting up the pregnant wife of Sanjay to investigate the anatomy of the native body. It shows the fascination of the European/Western fascination for the colonized body, and the fact that the body was one of the prime sites upon which the dominance of imperialism got inscribed.

The violence of the Emergency era is depicted by Rushdie and also by Mistry and Sahgal in corporeal terms. In Mistry's Such a Long Journey we have the character of Major Billimoria who is tortured by the authority to silence him because he knew too much. Once he serves the purpose of aiding in the nefarious design of the corrupt government activities, he is thrown into jail and tortured to death. In Mistry's other novel A Fine Balance we have depictions of tortured bodies (forced vasectomies, killings, murder etc) which reflect the menace of a brutal nation-state.

In Nayantara Sahgal's novel Rich Like Us we see broken, disabled bodies symbolizing the effects of ruthless state machinations on the hapless citizens. The mutilated personal and political freedom and its precarious survival in the dark days of the Emergency imposed by the tyrannical Indira Gandhi are symbolized by the recurring image of the handless, helpless beggar condemned by society ladies. These disabled, powerless bodies are stark reminder of a nation that has failed to deliver its promised freedom and security even so long after the Independence.

The novel exposes the reality of the repressive Emergency in all its ugly aspects. During the Emergency, thousands of people are held under detention without trial, and "citizens [are] broken on the wheel for remembering their rights" (RLU 258). The farmers and the workers are exploited and the resources of the whole nation are quietly used for the benefit of a few. In forced

vasectomy camps even the old and the unmarried are not spared. In the novel, Sonali says: "It did not need much imagination to sense the hate and fear inside the vans with iron-barred windows, like the ones used for collecting stray dogs for drowning, that now roamed the streets picking up citizens for vasectomy" (RLU 27). People who were deemed to be obstacles to the regimes and the reason of the state, the opposition and the strikers, were just bodies to be controlled, jailed and punished. As an active supporter of the new regime, Dev justifies the detention of people by stating that it had brought stability to the country and created healthy climate for business, trade and industry: "...this emergency is just what we needed. The troublemakers are in jail. An opposition is something we never needed...Strikes are banned" (RLU 10). The "other" bodies of the selfish, corrupt state are made powerless by brutal means.

Sahgal's novel also depicts instances of torture of bodies during the time of the emergency. The travails of Kishori Lal typify this tendency of the times. When he is arrested, he is slapped, pushed, prodded, humiliated, and, finally, put in a lockup because he is branded an RSS man. Like several others, he is charged with being a "saboteur, part of a conspiracy to overthrow the government" (RLU 190). The officials in charge of carrying out the task of the government dug up old and tried-out methods of torture: "upside-down hangings, rods up anuses, lighted cigarettes held to tender organs" (RLU 207); they also showed keenness to make new experiments, so that they could improve upon them.

These scenes of tortured bodies in jails make us see the level of degradation in the body politic; that "righteousness had decayed and rotted. And there was no sign of renewal or rescue" (RLU 214). But to cover it up, the official media had started legitimizing its actions by offering their version of things. That is why he fears "that history would now be revised and rewritten. All dictatorship meddled with history" (RLU 175). What becomes evident in the narrative of the novel is that this rewriting of history is done on the expense of the bodies of the powerless.

Sahgal's novel brings up another issue of significance: the issue of female agency amidst patriarchal/traditional and political domination that takes physical forms. She elaborates on the issue through the question of *sati* or bride-burning/self-immolation of Hindu women. This also sheds light on how women's bodies are often used as symbols of religious and nationalist sentiments. *Sati* is a site on which debates about female agency and dialogue between the discourses of feminism and nationalism converge. Though Sahgal depicts *sati* as a problem of the

past, this menace has not completely disappeared. In recent decades, there have been a few incidents of *sati* in the country.[72]

Sahgal exposes the dark side of this Hindu cultural tradition of *sati* through the events related of Sonali's great-grandmother committing *sati* in 1905. The action goes back in time through a manuscript, written by Sonali's grandfather; in 1915 (this manuscript is presented as evidence of the willingness of some Hindu citizens to finish with such practices themselves, which is an important detail to bear in mind from a postcolonial perspective).

In a novel where the narrator is female, Sahgal situates the recovery of the history of women's bodies as a site of contest between tradition and modernity through the lens of a male narrative (in the form of the grandfather's memoir). It is in this memoir that the male narrator offers a sympathetic recognition of the lack of choice and free will in women's lives which are constructed by ancient custom and cultural practice. Sahgal makes it clear that patriarchy and certain forms of nationalist ideology press upon women's circumstances restricting and containing free will.

The first thing Sahgal denies about sati is the widow's supposed consent: they were often sedated and drugged, which is why there were no screams when they were dragged to the pyre, making the victims look complicitous with the sacrifice. Secondly, Sahgal goes on to describe how some of them actually tried to run away from the fire. Beyond direct enforcement to perform sati, as is clearly the depicted case, the text does not dismiss the power of superstition and social pressure in convincing some depressed widows to go ahead with it. The hostility shown towards women who fail to carry out their act of self-immolation is depicted in the account quoted by Sahgal of the widow who refused to return to the pyre after escaping and immersing herself in the river:

> When the inhuman relatives saw this, they took her by the head and heels and threw her into the fire, and held her there till they were driven away by the heat; they also took up large blocks of wood with which they struck her, in order to deprive her of her senses, but she again made her escape, and without any help ran directly into the river...The people of her house followed her here and tried to drown her by pressing her under water. (RLU 154)

Once a woman decided to commit sati on her free will, turning back was regarded as an act of transgression and a dishonor to the family, and for which she was to be punished. In Sahgal's second account of *sati* from the colonial archives, the magistrate having twice failed to dissuade a young widow from carrying on with the self-cremation is described as a "victim of superstition" (RLU 156). In either case women are only perceived as acting autonomously by nationalist and colonial patriarchal authority alike when they conform to their particular narratives. These alternative cultural positionings objectify women by situating them as the site of conflict.

Through this exposure of the shameful practice and tradition of *sati*, Sahgal denounces the patriarchal and oppressive form of Hinduism. Outraged over his mother's murder/self-immolation, and unable to find any way of explaining it to himself, Keshav's grandfather writes: "So I cannot believe in Hinduism, whatever Hinduism might be. Not because of such evils as *sati*, but because evil is not explained" (RLU 136). That torture or violation of female bodies is commonplace in the country is revealed by Sahgal when she mentions of the rape and killing of lower-caste/class women in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Sahgal mentions the names of several cities and towns where women are fed to brick kilns after they have been abused: "Muzzafarpur, Samastipur, Bhojpur, Beguserai, Monghyr, Purnea, Gaya, Patna, Chapra" (RLU 68). Finally, Rose herself is murdered by her stepson Dev. All these, then, are instances of the oppression of women by tradition.

Against such oppressive traditional/patriarchic norms that objectify bodies of women as symbols and personal properties, Sahgal posits her idea of "the new woman". On several occasions she has stated that one of her major themes is the definition of the virtuous woman. In the "Meet the Author" address organized by the Sahitya Akademi in 1988, she said:

> In every novel the heroine has moved one step further away from the stereotype of the virtuous woman into a new definition of virtue... What does these three women [Rashmi, Saroj, and Simrit] walking out have to do with their virtue? The meaning of *sati* is a virtuous woman. And this is synonymous with self-immolation—a tradition arising out of the concept that woman is her husband's property and has no other life. Traditional virtue lies in staying put, suffering. The new woman does the opposite. No more sati, she is determined to live, and to live

in self-respect. Her virtue is courage, which is a willingness to risk the unknown and to face the consequences.[73]

In Rich Like Us Sonali is the prime example of the "new woman" who decides to walk out. She decides that she can no longer be a part of the corrupt system: "The Emergency had finished my career, but suddenly I didn't want a career in the crumbling unprofessionalism that bowed and scraped to a bogus emergency" (RLU 36). Individual acts of bravery, Sonali feels, are always worth doing, whether the ends are achieved or not. "The book closes on a note of hope; artificial limbs for the beggar and the realization by Sonali that Emergency could and would be over".[74] But the sad fact remains that not many women have the privilege of Sonali's class/caste background to walk out of the system, or to defend themselves against bodily violence and violation. As we come to the Partition, we see women again being violated in the name of nationalist and religious/communal sentiments.

Markings and brandings on bodies had become wide and more violent with the Partition of the sub-continent. In novels like Shauna Singh Baldwin's What the Body Remembers, Kushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan, Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy Man we witness how map inscription was often asserted as bodily inscription. The violence and horror of the Partition and the accompanying communal hatred was transferred and written onto the bodies by one community on the other. Partition narratives, both in English (The Ice-Candy Man, What the Body Remembers, Train to Pakistan, Meera Syal's Anita and Me etc; and other languages (Bedi's Lajawanti, the stories of Sadaat Hasan Manto, Bhisam Sahani's Tamas, Sobti's Zindaginama, Rahi Masoom Raza's Adha Gaon, Jyotirmoyee Devi's The River Churning etc.) speak abundantly about the unspeakable horror, mayhem, physical and psychological wounds, scars and the enduring trauma of the holocaust. They also give voice to the rarely told story of violence on female bodies during the communal conflicts of Partition.

Both in fictional and non-fictional writings, the body politic metaphor with regard to Partition has remained insistent. Writers and politicians have employed the analogy of physical dismemberment or amputation while writing and speaking about the Partition of the subcontinent. Mahatma Gandhi, who campaigned passionately against partition, declared that "the vivisection of India is like the vivisection of my own body".[75] Jinnah, who campaigned with no less passion

in favor of partition, likened it to "a surgical operation".[76] Even Jawaharlal Nehru came to believe that "[by] cutting off the head we will get rid of the headache".[77]

The unprecedented communal violence, massacres and corporeal gore, and mass-scale displacement of bodies, both dead and alive, during Partition find expression in the novels written in the backdrop of the Partition. People killed by marauding mobs, Sikhs shearing their hair in train carriages, men's heads chopped off as yanked-down trousers yielded evidence of circumcision or the absence of it, dead bodies piled high on roadside, trains full of dead bodies on the either side of the border—such scenes are abundantly found in the fictional representations of the Partition.

In Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy Man (1988), we have such descriptions of mob fury. Once it was confirmed that the division of the subcontinent was imminent, rioting starts in Lahore. Muslims and Sikhs and their Hindu supporters became vengeful towards one another. Passages describing bloodshed and murder highlight the brute in human beings. The central narrator in the novel, Lenny observes:

> The Sikhs milling in a huge blob in front wildly wave and clash their swords, kirpans and hockey-sticks and punctuate their shrieks with roars: Pakistan murdabad death to Pakistan!—And the Muslims shouting: "So? We'll play Holi-with-their-blood".[78]

> The terror the mob generates is palpable—like an evil, paralysing spell. The terrible procession, like a sluggish river, flows beneath us. Every short while a group of men, like a whirling eddy, stalls—and like the widening circles of a treacherous eddy dissolving in the main stream, leaves in its centre the pulpy and red flotsam of a mangled body. (IM 135)

> The whole world is burning. The air on my face is so hot. I think my flesh and clothes will catch fire. I start screaming: hysterically sobbing—how long does Lahore burn? Weeks? Months? (IM 139)

The pictures of mayhem, bestiality and mass scale destruction can also be traced in Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan (1956). It is a novel that teems with bodies. One of the earliest instances of extreme physical violence in the novel is the attack on Ram Lal, the money lender, by dacoits, and this incident disrupts the serene atmosphere of Mano Majra. The situation is worsened when two ghost trains arrive from Pakistan, carrying the bodies of Sikhs and Hindus, all of whom have been gruesomely hacked to pieces. The severity of the situation can be judged from the fact that the fuel stock for pyre to burn the corpses was totally used and bodies could not be given cremation. Many dead bodies were buried in a big pit dug near the station. The novel describes how during the monsoon, the gory remains of the dead Muslims came floating in the river Sutlej after a massacre upstream. Sikh villagers describe the panic in the following words:

> An old peasant with a gray beard lay flat on the water. A child's head butted into the old man's armpit. There was a hole in its back. There were many others coming down the river like logs hewn on the mountains. (...) Some were without limbs, some had their bellies torn open, many women's breasts were slashed. They floated in the sunlit river, bobbing up and down.[79]

That the body is often abused by those in power is demonstrated by Singh in the novel in the character of Juggut Singh who was detained and tortured by the local police on the false charge of being involved in the murder of Ram Lal:

> He had been through it once. Hands and feet pinned under legs of charpoys with half a dozen policemen sitting on them. Testicles twisted and squeezed till one became senseless with pain. Powdered red chillies thrust up the rectum by rough hands, and the sense of having the tail on fire for several days. All this, and no food and water, or hot spicy food with a bowl of shimmering cool water put outside the cell just beyond one's reach. (TP 91-92)

Later, Juggut Singh sacrifices his body on a railway track to save a trainload of his erstwhile Muslim neighbours, including Nooran, the Muslim weaver's daughter whom he loved.

The violation of bodies and of humanity during the violence of the Partition is a stark reminder of the failure of the utopian dream of peaceful national becoming in the subcontinent. Thus while new borders were being mapped across the land, people on both sides of the border were violently trying to map their communal identities onto the bodies of the members of each other's communities. During Partition, the mapping of borders and bodies became mutually constitutive. Bodies of both men and women were mapped by India and Pakistan as dispensable yet symbolic of countries' and communities' body politic.However a more detail exploration on women's bodies is necessary because of the disproportionate way in which they are targeted.

At Partition women's bodies became the sites of contestation for different competing discourses regarding religion, community and nation. Female bodies were violated, tortured, maimed and marked. The physical markings, bodily inscriptions and memories carried by thousands of women act as counter-narratives that ensure such atrocities are not edited out of the stories that India and Pakistan create of their pasts. The substantial recent feminist scholarship on partition by Urvashi Butalia, Kamala Bhasin, Ritu Menon, and others shows how women were subjects as well as victims of the re-formation of national boundaries, agents as well as victims of new and virulent cultural identities fundamental to the politics of the subcontinent today. The violence of partition comprised both physical and psychological wounding, with the physical wound bound up with aspects of somatically marked cultural identity. For men, bodily symbols of religious affiliation—circumcision or its absence, uncut hair of Sikh males—exposed their bearers to life-threatening violence. Feminist scholars argue that women's bodies are mapped, or defined with a particular embodiment of unproblematic identity, due to their culturally reinforced materiality and their institutionally sanctified appearances.[80] Approximately 70,000 to 100,000 women on both sides of the Indo-Pakistan border were raped, abducted, mutilated, tattooed with nationalistic slogans whereby Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim men sought to humiliate and annihilate the "other" while imprinting their own identity on the bearer of future generations.

In <u>Ice-Candy Man</u>, the violence of the Partition is narrated from the perspective of the child narrator Lenny whose Hindu Ayah (nurse) is abducted by Ice Candy Man and the mob. The Ayah is forced to prostitute her body and coerced into having sex with Ice Candy Man. He strips Ayah of her identity as a woman and as a Hindu. Whatever love he has for Ayah is smothered by his complete subjugation of her. He keeps her in the kotha (brothel) even after marrying her. Although Ayah escapes her abductor, but even with her family in Amritsar, she will be marked

by her defilement during Partition. Thus, she will suffer the psychological and emotional outbursts forever. This is true of Hamida, the new ayah of Lenny. She depicts a woman who has been besmirched and subsequently discarded by her family. Godmother tells Lenny about Hamida that she was kidnapped by the Sikhs. People "can't stand their women being touched by other men" (IM 227). Lenny is tormented by the wailing of a recovered woman at the refugee camp near her house.

In Train to Pakistan, Khushwant Singh gives a similar account of atrocities being inflicted upon women of other religions. He tells the tale of a young girl, Sundari. She was going to Gujranwala with her husband on the fourth day of her marriage. Her arms still covered with red lacquer bangles and her palms bright with henna (mehndi), she is happily day-dreaming on her way to her new home when the bus on which they are riding is attacked by Muslims. Her husband is stripped naked and dismembered before her eyes; she is gang-raped.

Many women died trying to avoid sexual violation, preserve their chastity, and protect their religious and family honour. Some women set themselves ablaze and sometimes all the women in family committed mass suicide. The amputation of breasts of women is one of the most gruesome injuries faced by the women. Ice Candy Man in Sidhwa's novel reports to his friends that a train from Gurdaspur has arrived in Lahore filled with murdered Muslims. He shouts, "Every one is dead. Butchered. They are all Muslims. There are no young women among the dead. Only two gunny bags full of women's breasts" (IM 159). This act of violence against Muslim women spurs him to inflict violence on Hindu and Sikh women. He exclaims, "I want to kill someone for each of the breasts they cut off the Muslim women" (IM 166). He satiates his appetite for revenge by kidnapping Ayah and forcing her to prostitute her body. Train to Pakistan mentions the mutilated breasts of the bodies arriving from the Pakistani side, even as Ice Candy Man also uses the same reference. Apart from the mention of mutilated breasts on both the sides, the way Ice Candy Man expresses his determination and convincing his friends to take revenge upon the Sikhs and the Hindus, the Sikh leader in Mano Majra in Singh's novel is also shown doing the same and invoking the Sikhs:

> I'll tell you what to do. He paused, looked around and started again. He spoke slowly, emphasising each sentence by stabbing the air with his forefinger, —for each Hindu and Sikh they kill, kill two Mussulmans. For each woman they abduct

> or rape, abduct two...For each trainload of dead, send across two...That will stop the killing on the other side. It will teach them that we can also play this game of killing and looting: (TP 162)

The history of the subcontinent is rife with ethnic and communal conflicts, the Partition being the most traumatic one, in which women have not only been the victims but the weapons of war. Novels like Train to Pakistan, Ice-Candy Man and What the Body Remembers have raised serious questions regarding the incidental violence towards women as well as its instrumental nature in targeting the female body. These novels have exposed the terrible social practice considering female bodies as repositories of a community's honour and identity. Defilement of a woman's body was, therefore, considered to be the greatest dishonor that a family and a community had to endure. And the violence inflicted upon women and an admission of violation was equivalent to a sacrilege against one's religion, country, and family. Writing about the depiction of such violation of female bodies and the testimonial nature of such bodies in Sidhwa's novel, Deepika Bahri says:

> The damaged bodies and psyches of women who became the sites of the worst violence at the time and continue to be the first target in communal violence serve as living, if muted and distorted testimonial to their token status in the war over contending factions, the punishment of the female body becoming an attack on the opponent through an elaborate inscription of women as the patrimonial body of state and religion.[81]

Women are often fetishized as symbols of national and religio-communal being and pride. In such a situation, the image of the chaste or pure woman becomes the icon for the purity of the nation. Urvashi Butalia points out how the Organizer's front page story on 14 August 1947 carried an illustration "of Mother India, the map of the country, with a woman lying on it, one limb cut off and severed, with Nehru holding the bloody knife responsible for doing the severing".[82] Five decades later, novelist Shauna Singh Baldwin depicts the gendered nature of Partition violence in her novel What the Body Remembers, and makes visible the way

displacement, abduction, rapes, and murders systematically marked women's bodies to signify community, nation, and state.

In the section titled "Delhi, September 1947" of What the Body Remembers, Jeevan (Roop's brother) describes his discovery of the mutilated body of his wife Kusum:

> [a] woman's body lay beneath, each limb severed at the joint. This body was sliced into six parts, then arranged to look as if she were whole again' (WBR510).

The "partitioning" of Kusum is symptomatic of the vicious nature of attacks, but Jeevan, who as a soldier is accustomed to brutality, is unsettled as his wife has not been the victim of sexual assault: "[t]o cut a woman apart without first raping—a waste, surely" (WBR 511). Jeevan is aware of the prevalence of rape as a weapon to emasculate men of a different religious community. However, a closer examination of Kusum's body reveals that her body has been ravaged by the Muslim gang. Her body is made the tabula on which the Muslims inscribe their message for Jeevan and the Sikh community. The gang removed her womb to symbolize their desire to eliminate all Sikhs, in the present and in the future:

> We will stamp your kind, your very species from existence. This is no longer merely about izzat or land. This is a war against your quom, for all time. Leave. We take the womb so there be no Sikhs from it, we take the womb, leave you its shell. (WBR 450)

The notion that the honour of the community lay in protecting its women from male aggression of other communities was so strongly embedded in the minds of the men that it made them propel their women towards annihilation either willingly or forcibly. Roop could not understand why it was only Kusum who was killed and the rest of the family escaped. She uncovers a terrible secret when, at last, her father Deputy Bachan Singh unburdens himself to her, revealing that he beheaded his daughter-in-law to save the honour of the family: "[e]very day I had been hearing that the seeds of that foreign religion were being planted in Sikh women's wombs. No, I said: I must do my duty" (WBR 520). He delineates that he called Kusum and explained to her that he had to do what Sant Param Singh said the Sikhs must do. He tells Roop

how he explained what 'had' to be done to Kusum. He also describes how she concurred, allegedly, with his plan. However, his martyring of Kusum is presented as being more about his wishes than about the aspirations of his daughter-in-law. Though Bachan Singh presents Kusum's death in the heroic mode and considers her sacrifice as an inevitable response to the violent times, Baldwin depicts Roop as unprepared to accept the execution as a necessary sacrifice. She wants Kusum to be remembered in her own right, not as a victim of her father's unstinting belief in the need to maintain female sexual purity and family honour. Throughout her father's narration of the last moments of Kusum's life, Baldwin employs Roop's thoughts to interrupt the fable that her father wants to enshrine, and her cynicism is apparent when he declares how the gods helped him to decapitate Kusum cleanly with a single blow: "one stroke? Just one stroke" (WBR 521). Roop will not credit the idea that her sister-in-law's meek acceptance of her fate can only be ascribed to her virtuousness, and views Kusum's inability to protest as stemming from her inculcation with the norms of Sikh society.

Continuing patterns of violence in the history of the subcontinent in the aftermath of Partition speak of enduring trauma, betraying a wound that has never quite healed. The dark and horrible events surrounding Partition have left their marks on subsequent histories of the subcontinent and in the psyche of later generations. The Partition, in this sense, can be read as cultural trauma whose effects have leaked "beyond the immediate moment, both vertically, affecting the children of survivors, as well as laterally, spreading across groups to include those of its members who themselves have not been affected physically".[83] Writers have often depicted this enduring trauma and inter-generational transference or transmission of the past. The traumatic physical and psychological aspect of the Partition and its continued legacy of horror are explored in this last section.

The continuing trauma of violence and dislocation is a theme that finds expression in Amitav Ghosh's novel The Shadow Lines and Siddhartha Deb's novel The Point of Return. Tridib's death in The Shadow Lines in the riots of 1964 is the central event in the narrative and it triggers the memory of the narrator in composing the family drama. The narrator carried the trauma of Tridib's violent death for all the years before the final redemption in London. In Tridib's death, we get a glimpse of the terrible physical form that communal hatred takes. The communal riot was not a freak event but the result of something deep-seated in the psyche of the

people of the sub-continent, the seeds of which were planted in the Partition. The narrator comes to the realization that the past lives in the present and that the present is shaped by the past or, as the novelist puts it, "the past is concurrent with the present" (TSL 31). The boundaries between the past and present are revealed to be illusory like the boundaries that divide countries and places.

Most obviously, for a great many people the holocaust of the Partition was traumatic in the original sense of the Greek word trauma: an injury inflicted on the body. But this injury goes beyond the corporeal. While dealing with an event as terrible as the Partition, we need to bear in mind the psychoanalytic sense of trauma as "the wound of the mind—the breach in the mind's experience of time, self and the world".[84] The Oxford English Dictionary defines "wound" as "a hurt caused by the laceration or separation of the tissues of the body by a hard or sharp instrument" and a "psychic injury, esp. one caused by emotional shock the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed".[85] This OED definition asserts the relationship between physical injury and psychological response in addressing the legacy of historical calamity and the utility of medical analogies in understanding processes of collective memory. Second, it highlights the relationship between emotional hurt, the repression of memory, and the psychic costs of that repression. It emphasizes the tendency to deny or bury one's traumatic past and suggests that such efforts, however psychologically understandable, are doomed to fail. The original injury, even if sustained long ago, thus "remains unhealed". Almost all the novels dealing with the Partition reveal this trauma—both as a physical and psychological wound, but none so exclusively as Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines and Siddhartha Deb's novel The Point of Return.

Priya Kumar considers The Shadow Lines as a testimony of loss and memory since the text compels us to concede "the past-in-presentness of partition as a history that is not done with, that refuses to be past".[86] Due to a long silence within and without with respect to the individual and communal crisis of 1964, it takes the narrator "fifteen years to discover" that there was a connection between his "nightmare bus ride back from school and the events that befell Tridib and others in Dhaka" (TSL 214). The narrator wonders at his stupidity for finding the truth only after such a long time.

The legacy of the Partition is still strong because the sub-continent is still under the sway of the kind of nationalism that is underpinned by a glorification of violence and bloodshed and

killing of foreign bodies in the larger interest of the nation. In Ghosh's novel, the grandmother epitomizes this concept of nationalism. We see such ideas expressed in her laudatory comments on England's long history of "war and bloodshed":

> It took those people a long time to build that country; hundreds of years, of war and bloodshed. Everyone who lived there has earned his right to be there with blood; with their brother's blood and their father's blood and their son's blood. They know they're a nation because they have drawn their borders with blood...War is their religion. That's what it takes to make a country. Once that happens people forget they were born this or that, Muslim or Hindu, Bengali or Punjabi: they become a family born of the same pool of blood. That is what you have to do for India, don't you see? (TSL 77–78)

Her desire to see an India united by blood is underpinned by a hysterical sense of insecurity and potential danger. And it is this hysterical aspect of her nationalism that comes to the fore during India's war with China in 1962, when, in a fit of frenzy, she declares "we have to kill them before they kill us" (TSL237). Ghosh shows how this aggressive nationalism and the deep-seated communal hatred make for the continued fear and trauma in the subcontinent.

Deb's novel The Point of Return can be read as a trauma narrative that speaks of continued legacy of violence and Partition which takes destructive corporeal as well as psychological forms. In The Point of Return Deb memorializes the traumatic experience of migrancy, displacement and the exilic condition of a cultural minority and the terror faced by them in the wake of growing sub-nationalist aspirations and militant ethnic assertion. The northeastern region has seen so much terror and violence, and experienced dislocation alienation, loss of home, migrancy, that entire ways of life and social and political existence have been traumatized. Deb is a writer who seems to understand the trauma felt by the people and society of this region. He himself was a victim of ethnic violence and has experienced its trauma.

The story is about the Dam family which came to India during the Partition of the subcontinent, but has never been integrated into the national system. The Dam family has always lived under the fear and menace of being assaulted by the local tribal people among whom they have lived since 1947, and where Dr. Dam has worked for his whole life. Things became hostile

as the state was again breaking up and new boundaries were drawn again which separated Assam from the town which was their home. People like Dr. Dam and his family displaced and uprooted by the Partition of '47 never had a stable certain "home" in the new country to which they came in search of a new life.

It is during this time of drawing new boundaries in the state of Assam that Dr. Dam and Babu had to endure racism and unprovoked assault from the tribal people, in the very town which had been their home until then. Dr. Dam becomes paralyzed for life in one such attack. He always carried the trauma of menace and violence inside him and one night he describes a night of terror to his son, thus transferring that trauma to the next generation to carry. During the high time of paranoia of this redrawing of state boundaries, and tribal students' movements, there were widespread killings, strikes, assaults, forcing the non-tribals, especially the Bengalis, "...to read the landscape of our everyday lives in terms of new lexicon of outrage and fear sweeping through the town....dividing people into insiders and outsiders, laying down the rules of existence" (TPOR 175-176).

The combination of physical violation with physical dislocation during partition means that not just the body, but also "the body's place in the world", became a site of trauma.[87] Veena Das aptly comments that "consequent to this violence in which the most interior aspects of life were the most intruded upon, fleeing to another alien space led to a division of the self and the world according to a logic that made the self radically fugitive and the world radically fragmented".[88] Novels on Partition powerfully testify how men and women alike shared this fragmented and fugitive post-partition reality, just as men and women alike were subjected to communal violence.

In Ghosh's novel The Shadow Lines we see how the traumatic memories of the place left behind after Partition influence the world-view of the characters, especially of the grandmother. Images and memories of lost home in Dhaka continue to haunt her which she transfers on to the narrator; and it is in Dhaka again, to where she goes to reclaim a part of her past life, that Tridib loses his life to the mob. In Deb's novel The Point of Return also we see the traumatic condition of the bodies in relation to the place which they inhabit.

Babu for whom the town was the only place he could call "home" which he ever knew and loved became a place of utter bewilderment, fear and menace during this time of paranoia and hostility. The violence inflicted on the bodies of the migrants and non-tribals by the local

people is occasioned because of the contested issue of the place and the cartography of the place. The social and ontological ruptures affected by traumatic events gives his narration a tint of nostalgia as well as the realization of irrevocable loss. That place itself can be a site of trauma for bodies inhabiting it is explored in Deb's other novel Surface (2005).[89] As in The Point of Return, in Surface also, place or landscape evokes a sense of menace, fear and trauma for the characters. This novel is an account of the hard, uncertain way of life on the India-Myanmar frontier under the constant shadow of ethnic militia, impoverishment, and territorial violence—all of which have subverted the whole notion of citizenship, and encouraged corruption and discontent.

In Surface, the narrator, who is a journalist from mainland India unlike the narrator in The Point of Return, journeys into this hinterland in search of a story that proves elusive as the place where nothing is what it seems to be. He goes through the region and traces the insecurity and agonies of life in a place lacerated by unrelenting conflict and violence. Both Cathy Caruth and Geoffrey Hartman interrogate the relationship between trauma and landscape, reminding us that landscape always highlights matters of not only how we see but also from what vantage point we see.[90]

Drawing on Hartman's theory on the relation of place and trauma, Ann Whitehead says that the process of viewing a landscape is therefore one of careful construction, through which the indifferent or unaccommodating *space* of a site or environment is transformed into a *place*, which draws the viewer into its territory. Crucial to this task of conversion is the viewer's location of a proper position or perspective, from which to gain access to the landscape. On encountering a particular site, the viewer must find her bearings in relation to it, in order to fulfil the demands of landscape.[91] In Surface, the narrator is from mainland India and the way he looks at the landscapes around him betrays his preconceptions and metropolitan bias towards the Northeast. He is confused, bewildered at times and always feels some kind of menace lurking around him throughout his journey in the wild, mountained regions. We see epistemological impasse on the part of the narrator, an outsider, who cannot comprehend the place/space, both social and material, in which he finds himself.

Images of corporeal violence, wounding, killing, mayhem, madness are found abundantly in Surface—all of which imply the violent, rootless socio-political life of this region which has remained alienated from mainland India. Euan Sutherland's narrative, a fictional memoir of a colonial newspaper editor, incorporated by Deb in the novel, where we have the story of Jim,

gives us insights into one of the most decisive and gruesome and least documented battles of the 2nd World War fought in the Northeast between the Japanese and the Allied Forces. The descriptions of the traumatized, wounded, rotten bodies in this section testify to the horrible history of violence and chaos. It also provides us materials to speculate the relation between historical trauma and place.

During the violent battles with the Japanese in the mountains and jungles of the Northeast, Jim becomes aware of his true self and the monsters that everybody carries within them, and that the boundary between civilization and barbarianism can get blurred quite easily in that wild place. He carries a terrible secret within him, the knowledge of his inner monstrosity, and the memory of his barbaric act is evoked every time he remembers that wild place where he lost his reason. This traumatic memory, the belatedness or haunting return of that event and memory of that place drives him almost to the verge of madness, and to keep his sanity intact, Jim starts translating the letters and poems found on the dead Japanese soldiers, whose trauma he could share and empathise with.

The shocking experiences of those war months in the Northeast made Jim distasteful of the ideals of order, discipline, and the civilizing mission that the British Empire avowedly stood for. Later Jim tells Sutherland: "How orderly everything is in your second city of the empire. Wonderfully arranged, all straight lines and precise rules and stiff spines, and how all that becomes a big lie when you move to the edge of the empire and run loose in the jungle with guns and knives".[92] It is just a thin red line that divides civilization from the wilderness, as Sutherland says, "The best of men could go mad in such a place as you were in".[93] Jim ultimately commits suicide overwhelmed by the traumatic memories in the jungles of the Northeast. But before he dies, he urges Sutherland to take care of the translations of the letters of the dead Japanese soldiers which he felt would act as testimonies to the trauma that they had all gone through.

There are other instances in the novel where place or landscape is depicted as traumatic and overwhelmed with the burden of historical memory and sense of loss and fracture. Throughout his journey, the narrator encounters people and societies traumatized by terrorism, impoverishment, militarization and bitterness and seething anger and discontent. Landscape becomes a site of cultural and historical haunting, the surface on which trauma has been imprinted and in which the evidence of a terrible, violent past, as well as the continuing violence of the postcolonial present have been concealed.

Cathy Caruth points out, "the traumatized person...carries an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history they cannot entirely possess".[94] Dr. Dam and his family carried this chaos of History and his son Babu carried it, too. Babu carries the inherited sense of loss and confusion born out of historical displacement. Babu finally learns to join his own pain to that of others, till his own being flows into and reclaims the horrific history he cannot turn away from. Swallowing the unfolding history of the subcontinent, its arbitrary notion of a homogenous nation and territorial violence Babu becomes a teller of tales. Kali Tal suggests in Worlds of Hurt (1996) that there is a "universal drive to testify", "to bear the tale".[95] In his own words, Babu returns as a "...teller of tales, the inept archaeologist of memories" (TPOR 186).

Trauma of physical and psychological wounding and violence have remained inscribed in the bodies and memories of people who have lived through those events. The novels of Partition show that testimony need not always be produced only by the survivor herself/himself who has lived through and survived extreme forms of mutating bodily violence but also by the later generations who continue to live under the burden of traumatic memories and fear passed onto them. These novels show that traumatic memories that may be passed on generationally, and resist closure through their very replication.

To Dori Laub's assertion about Holocaust survivors, "there is in each survivor an imperative need to *tell* and thus to come *know* one's story,"[96] we can draw the parallel with Babu's narrative mission. He says that the migrant is not as cut off as they might appear, especially the migrant who is also a writer. It is through the act of recalling and narrating his hometown in the novel that he says, "I truly become my place. I am my own hometown" (TPOR 154). The Point of Return as a piece of Trauma fiction displays the twin imperatives to both represent the event in all of its traumatic specificity as well as to evoke the dislocation, distortion, and alienation of the lived experience of trauma. The imperative to tell the traumatic story, to "bear the tale" is evident in The Shadow Lines as the narrator searches for the lost connections, the traces of forgotten, unspeakable history.

The narrator portrays a series of political incidents in Calcutta and Dhaka simultaneously to bring out the enormity of the central tragedy in his narration. It started with the disappearance of Mu-i-Mubarak, the hair of the Prophet Mohammed, from Hazratbal Mosque in Kashmir in 1963 and its recovery in 1964. In one of the riots in Khulna, a small town in the distant east wing

of Pakistan, a demonstration turned violent on the 4th of January 1964. This demonstration is "branded in [the narrator's] memory" (TSL 222) because it is in this demonstration that Tridib lost his life. While recollecting an individual's sacrifice and his community's struggle with senseless political and national barriers, the narrator states:

> Every word I write about those events of 1964 is the product of a struggle with silence. It is a struggle I am destined to lose—have already lost—for even after all these years I do not know where within me, in which corner of my world, this silence lies. All I know of it is what it is not. It is not, for example, the silence of an imperfect memory. Nor is it a silence enforced by a ruthless state—nothing like that: no barbed wire, no check-points to tell me where its boundaries lie (TSL 213).

The narrator has a twin motive in narrating from the sources of memory: first, to communicate the lurking political turmoil beneath the tender veneer of his childhood years in post-partition India; and secondly, to save his memories from slipping into the realm of forgetting. These struggles of the characters to remember against the forces of forgetting are very much a corporeal function.

Postcolonial narrative, like trauma narrative, tend to reclaim agency both by remembering belatedly, and by trying to heal, to undo that trauma by recalling in a public venue—but in the mode of the personal—the violence of nation formation. Both insist on the importance of remembering the forgotten, unhomely, and marginalized people and their histories. In dealing with or witnessing trauma and violence, both physical and psychological these novels emerge as sites of historical reparations and reconciliations.

As we have seen, the writers under the present study invest their narratives with the corporeal specificities of the violence and chaos inflicted by history. Bodies, Sara Ahmed writes, are capable of remembering "histories, even when we forget them".[97] The way the body is figured differs between genres of writing and across different historical periods. Recent theoretical understanding of the body has made it possible to conceive of the body as a site of historical investigation which in turn can flesh out and shed new light on many seemingly disembodied historical processes.

What finally emerges is the truth that the body is inevitably a signifying body, and hence a site on and through which we can construct a specific account of the colonial and postcolonial experience and politics of embodiment, including questions of oppression and resistance, disease, violence, consumption, sexuality and gender, whether treated realistically or allegorically. The body and corporeality become a powerful trope for reading the postcolonial Indian nation or its history. The excessive, carnivalesque bodies signify the teeming plurality and the fluidity of Indian identity which remain, like the bodies of Saleem, Mik, and Sanjay, uncontained and uncontainable in fixed form. The brutality of an authoritarian state and unrelenting pressure and chaos of history get inscribed in the cracking, disintegrating, sick, distorted bodies of the characters. The politics of othering and exclusivity of an increasingly xenophobic state create marginal people whose unhomely, uncertain lives are mirrored in paralyzed, diseased, neglected bodies.

Reading bodies and the violation and wounding of bodies gains significance when we come to the embodied politics of gendered violence. The corporeal aspects of these texts are instructive for scholars seeking to write a *long durée* history of the relationship between gender and state formation. Here we get a disturbing reminder of how states expressed honour and authority through women's bodies. Some of the texts under the present study, especially the novels dealing with Partition present diverse insights into the manifold ways in which women's bodies as sites of symbolic capital and honour are both regulated and violated. They also speak to contemporary debates on questions of women's agency and subjectivity in contexts of gendered violence. In "Transfiguring: Colonial Body into Postcolonial Narrative" (1992) Elleke Boehmer says, "when national histories are revealed as stochastic, divided, painful, the body, too, is exposed as fissured, reduced".[98] Reading the bodily or corporeal specificities of the novels with regard to the history and the state of the nation help us see the truth of this statement.

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Chapter IV

History and Politics of Representation

Who has responsibility for what and whom? Who does what? Who takes responsibility for saying things for whom? Who does the saying and the writing?

Jackie Huggins, Sister Girl (1998: 116)

One of the characteristic aspects of postcolonial studies is that it is simultaneously oppositional and self-critical. This thesis is also marked with this kind of reading. In the previous chapters, we discussed the novels from the perspective of their oppositional, critical attitudes towards dominant discourses of Indian historiography and nation. But it has been pointed out at the very beginning that these novels are not the answers regarding the embattled entity called India. The alternative, critical histories that these writers present are not necessarily the most ideal versions. This chapter attempts to reveal some of the ellipses, blind-spots in their representation of history, and it discusses at length some of the charges and accusations that are often brought against them.

The growing popularity of postcolonial literature and its dazzling marketing success has recently spawned a disquieting trend of self-criticism from the very ranks of postcolonial studies which has tended to examine the causes of this popularity and the material as well as economic conditions under which these new writings from formerly colonized countries are produced and received. Dennis Walder, for instance, in the book Post-colonial Literatures in English: History, Language, Theory (1998) argued that the ambiguities of the term "postcolonial" being many, the writings under its rubric might be best defined in terms of the conditions of their production, reception, andevaluation, that is, who wrote them, where did they originate, who read them, and how they were interpreted and valued.[1]

The study of the issues related to the production and reception of literature is relevant here because in the times of globalization, it is the market which dominates the social processes to the utmost degree. The market operates through multiple and sometimes

conflicting agents and they all play an overwhelming role in the process of "making" contemporary writing. The publishing industry is a powerful force and it manipulates the market in creating demands for certain types of cultural products, thereby shaping the content as well as directing the ways literature is valued and interpreted. In this way marketing becomes a form of representation and interpretation which readers knowingly receive and contest.[2]

Along the global market, the critical enterprise or the role of the academy is also crucial in the popularization, canonization and dissemination of postcolonial literatures. In the ideologically charged context of postcolonial literature, the role of the critics takes on an added significance because it is they who, to a large extent, normalize the representations of the periphery offered by postcolonial authors. If the literatures of the postcolonial nations represent their own ideologies and resistance, the critical enterprise also functions under the particular worldliness of the critics themselves. Therefore, the ultimate meaning, in what is called the "social being of literature" of a particular text emerge in the interstices of the writer/text and the critical interpretation/reception of the same. We must, therefore, deal not only with the text and the author, but also with the critic and the way the postcolonial text is received and marketed for consumption.

The production of a literary text involves a certain regime of power and politics. While the author draws from raw materials of a literary text, so does the critic. The critics play an important role in interpreting a literary text and setting the paradigms and criteria for its reception by the wider reading public. The critics, as Edward Said points out, "create not only the values by which art is judged and understood, but they embody in writing those processes and actual conditions in the present by means of which art and writing bear significance".[3] Therefore, all these issues of literary production, marketing, politics of reception and consumption gain urgency when we relate them to the kind of literary texts that we have been discussing in the preceding chapters. The questions of the dissemination of the idea of India and Indian history in literary texts, and the ways they are being received, valued and consumed are crucial.

There has been a consistent tendency, at least in the West, to read most of the texts discussed in this work as being not only novels, but as history and praised for their

"pedagogic capacity to disseminate political information".[4] Rushdie himself claimed that he never intended his novel to be read as history. In Imaginary Homelands Rushdie wrote:

> [Saleem's] story is not history, but it plays with historical shapes. Ironically, the book's success—its Booker Prize, etc. – initially distorted the way in which it was read. Many readers wanted it to be the history, even the guide-book, which it was never meant to be.[5]

Other writers also voiced their unease about the tendency of western readership and the publishing market regarding these novels as reflective of authentic history of postcolonial societies. But despite such disavowals by the writers themselves and much opposition from many fronts, the tendency to regard these postcolonial Indian English writers as the most efficient mouthpieces of Indian history and culture has remained and it is one aspect of our engagement with these texts that need closer scrutiny. The popularity of postcolonial writing in the West and the reasons for the same are crucial in engaging with this problem of the authenticity of these texts as historico-cultural documents.

With the spread and dominance of post-colonialism and postcolonial studies, the once-colonized countries and writings from the formerly colonized parts of the world began to infiltrate the Western academic world. Harish Trivedi, while discussing the case of India in this Derridean excess of "post-colonialism" and attention on non-Western writers expresses an anxiety which is most pertinent and disturbing:

> For the first time probably in the whole history of the Western academy, the non-West is placed at the centre of its dominant discourse. Even if it is in part a sort of compensation for all the colonial material exploitation, the academic attention now being paid to the post-colonial is so assiduous as to soothe and flatter. Never before, for example, was Indian writing (though crucially, writing only in English) so widely represented in a monumentally canonical metropolitan work as in the Routledge Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English (1994). It was moreover self-represented, with the

entries on Indian authors and themes being written not by metropolitan critics but by as many as sixty-seven Indian academics.[6]

In this "scramble for post-colonialism," India has proved to be the most covetous entity.[7] So much so that in any discussion on postcolonialism, India or Indian writing in English is deemed to be essential presence. There is a groundswell of critical work on India and Indian writing in English, and Indian English writers and certain texts (of which Rushdie's Midnight's Children remains the foremost and most emblematic) as well as academic figures and critics of Indian origin (of whom Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak are the cult figures) have attained international pre-eminence and sometimes are co-terminous with postcolonialism and the postcolonial condition. This India-specificity of postcolonial studies and the extensive work done on India has left Africa and other formerly-colonized parts of the world in a marginal position.[8] Unlike in the real historical "scramble for Africa", the scramble for postcolonialism has regarded India a bounty worthy of constant attention.

The prominence and popularity of Indian English writings among western readers and in metropolitan academic spaces in the era of globalization have raised questions about the relation between the diasporic writers writing in English and India-based writers writing in English as well as those writing in regional languages. While the former has achieved canonical status in postcolonial cultural studies, the later has comparatively less attention.

This phenomenon has serious consequences in the way literary representation of India takes place as well as literary discourses are shaped. In other words ever since the international market, academy and readership have valorized such writers as Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, Rohinton Mistry and Bharati Mukherjee, the representation of India by non-diasporic writers also has come to be influenced by the success of these writers. The very success of these Indo-Anglian novelists raises some importantissues about the nature of "India" portrayed, and about the reading and study ofpost-colonial literatures in the West, issuesto do with language and appropriation, forinstance.

The achievement oflndian fiction in English is undeniable. Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to judge the strength of Indian literature on the basis of the work done originally in English. The truth is that the vast body of literature written in the different regional languages

of the country is equally rich and, very often, far more nuanced and responsive to the pressing issues of the nation.It is increasingly being argued by many that the high profile of writers in English is partly due tosuch factors as their easier accessibility, oreven to alleged pandering to the expectationsof Western readers. The situation is compounded by the fact that few Western critics and commentators on these writershave any knowledge of an Indian language other than English or, perhaps, a desire to explore the increasing body of work available in translation. This chapter, along with the issues related to the global market, metropolitan consumption vis-à-vis these novels, also engages with the linguistic dimension.

The most crucial and sustained charge against these writers and texts is that they present an exotic representation of Indian nation and history which gives them a freeway ticket to international popularity and academic reception in the West. This charge of exoticization or fetishization of cultural products from the so-called Third World by the global market is one issue that has recently been in the forefront of postcolonial debates. In the following sections we shall try to examine the role of the global market and politics of consumption of these historical novels, the charge of exoticism/fetishization against these writers, and the issue of authenticity. The substance of our argument in the next section is that the force of globalization and force of the market exert an indisputable influence in the way representation of the nation, history and culture has been done. Not only the market but the academic critical enterprise, i.e., the critical interpretation and valuation of these texts by the critics play significant role in fuelling consumption and directing the canonization of certain texts and writers according to predictable criteria and paradigms that smack of colonial nostalgia and neo-Orientalist tendencies. The flip side of this argument is that these writers very often fall prey to the demands of the global market, ending up presenting exotic images and ideas regarding Indian history and nation which are then consumed avidly by the West as the most authentic documents of India.

I.

In the era of globalization, the world has become an integrated system ofconjunctures and disjunctures.[9] Though such a system existed in earlier times also, today, this has become much more comprehensive and forceful under the impact of an increasing penetration of

capital and improved technologies of communication and travel, among other things.[10] It is now generally agreed by scholars of different orientations that there is a definite and "extraordinary cultural transformation of planetary society" because as Alberto Melucci says, never before have human cultures been exposed to such a massive reciprocal confrontation, and never has the cultural dimension of human action been directly addressed as the core resource for production and consumption.[11]

In such a scenario, commodities have acquired a life of their own, and they circulate as signs within differential sign-system: "the object is no longer referred to in relation to a specific utility, but as a collection of objects in their total meaning".[12] No longer existing in and of themselves, the commodities in question have come to acquire meaning only within a system of differences. The market dominates the ways in which particular commodities are made to circulate as signifiers of prestige and of value so that the consumers are drawn towards them. Ultimately, these products become symbolic tools in the construction of collective and individual identities.

It will be argued that this entire process of production, dissemination, valuation and consumption, in short, the social construction of taste, involves a New Orientalism. What emerges from all this is the fact that these novels, in their engagement with history and culture, do not simply remain as cultural artifacts, but come to embody and signify in the course of their circulation and consumption, a process which is intrinsically political. This chapter deals with this politics of representation which involves not just the literary aspect but the material aspect of literature—its production, dissemination and consumption—or what Arjun Appadurai has described as the "social life of things".[13]

In these times of globalization, nothing lies outside the market. The logic of quick turnover and greater profit uses various persuasive measures to increase and create demands. This profit-driven trend of mass production intensifies commodification and creates a false sense of consumer choice. Jean Baudrillard argues that

> ..the current indoctrination into systematic and organized consumption is *the equivalent and the extension, in the twentieth century, of the great indoctrination of rural populations into industrial labor, which occurred throughout the nineteenth century.* The same process of rationalization of

productive forces, which took place in the nineteenth century in the sector of *production is accomplished, in the twentieth century, in the sector of consumption* [....] The ideology of consumption would have us believe that we have entered a new era [...] where justice has finally been restored to Man and to his desires. But [...] Production and Consumption are *one and the same grand logical process in the expanded reproduction of the productive forces and of their control.*[14] (italics in original)

Cultural critics like Baudrillard and Roland Barthes among others, have shown how culture can be approached as the system of the production and consumption of signs. Baudrillard discusses consumption as a deeply *social* activity in which the consumers are implicated in a general system of exchange and in the production of coded values. Approaching culture in the way defined by Baudrillard and Barthes makes it possible for us to examine what commodities are being produced/consumed, what signification they come to embody and who consumes them to what purpose.[15]

The narrative fiction is the best-selling literary form, and stories of exile, migration, dislocation, nation and nationalism, cultural hybridity and historical re-imaginings figure prominently in the literary markets these days. The novel plays a crucial role in the transmission of stereotypes to a wide reading public that consumes texts in the Barthesian sense. Dominant Western culture employs various strategies in order to benefit from globalism and to maintain its hegemony under the guise of liberalism. Politics and demands of global consumption come in a big way in the ways cultural products are packaged and marketed, and certain authors, who ostensibly fulfill these demands, are being lauded as the most authentic cultural informants and others marginalized both by the global/western marketing apparatus and the First World academy.[16]

The widespread expectation of the metropolitan/Western readers/consumers has been to look for an allegorical interpretation of the nation or the knotty question of postcolonial nationhood. The global market and the publishing industry have also fuelled and tried to cash in on this expectation. The explanation of the status of these novels in metropolitan postcolonial criticism and syllabi lies in the fact that they, among other things, are available to be read as national allegories. Quite frequently it seems that when it comes to international

mass popularity or studying Indian English writing, precisely those texts, which continue to be privileged, are those that are more available to such allegorizing. This susceptibility to allegorizing is an important reason that explains why some of their novels have occupied prominent places in the postcolonial canon and others have not. The names of certain writers recur so often in course descriptions and in the titles of journal articles, conference papers and book chapters that lay readers might be forgiven for thinking that other writers, if they are available, must not be worth reading. Writers like Rushdie, Ghosh, Chandra, Mistry, Sahgal, Baldwin etc. have been lauded, read and studies by critics and common readers as the most authentic cultural informants who represent the natives to the metropolitan centre.

Moreover, the multicultural backgrounds, cosmopolitan worldview of these writers and a plethora of assumptions associated with them have enhanced their status as so called native informant. Timothy Brennan has noted this connection between the popularity of these writers and their cosmopolitan lifestyles:

> In the interplay of class and race, metropolis and periphery, 'high' and 'low'...cosmopolitans have found a special home, because they are both capturing a new world reality that has a definite social basis in immigration and international communications, and are at the same time fulfilling the paradoxical expectations of a metropolitan public...But more importantly, they are writers for whom the national affiliations that had been previously 'given' as part of the common worldview of the Third World Literature have lost their meanings.[17]

Writers from India are canonized by the West on certain criteria which are regarded as symptomatic of these writers. They have been appropriated by the West on the basis of the national paradigm.Even when we come to the early writers like Anand and Rao, we see that the most recurring line of discussion has been that of the nation. Novels like Midnight's Children, The Shadow Lines, The Great Indian Novel, Such a Long Journey, A Fine Balance and Rich Like Us have all been celebrated and canonized by both the Western market and the academy on the basis of their responsiveness to the "authorized' questions, the foremost of which have been the nation and the historical representation. While discussing the complex

nexus between the popularity/canonization of postcolonial writers and critical reception of the same, Masood Ashraf Raja says:

> Similarly, the critic as well as the reading public, located in the metropolitan, also read the writers' works with a certain horizon of expectations, with a certain set idea of what to expect and what to extrapolate. It is this author-critic nexus—representation and interpretation—that deserves our attention.[18]

This does not mean that there's anything wrong in engaging the national question on the part of these authors. Their historiographic revision and re-imagination of the nation in alternative ways other than the dominant colonial, nationalist ones have done a great deal in fulfilling some lacunae and gaps and fissures in Indian historiographies. But the problem is related to the ways these texts have been appropriated by the global market and the western academy. The marketing and consequently the reception of these postcolonial cultural texts have shown a fetishism and tendency of turning them into commodified objects.

One of the strategies employed by the Western marketing media is to present these writers as the most efficient spokesmen, as "native informant" of the postcolonial nation. These writers are presented to the metropolitan consumers as the most helpful and reliable mediators between them and the "exotic" unknown "other". Salman Rushdie is the most visible and iconic example of Third World Cosmopolitan writers as discussed by Brennan. The most famous example is the case of Rushdie's Midnight's Children. The blurb of the 1981 Picador edition screamed: "At last a literary continent has found its voice," proclaims an undoubtedly enthusiastic, if suspiciously anonymous, reviewer. Graham Huggan writes: "One can imagine the wry amusement with which Rushdie must have greeted this astonishing news—just elide several thousand years of Indian literary history and presto, the 'representative' Indian voice! A sleight of hand well worthy of Rushdie's 'magic-realist novel".[19] It has been contested by many critics and commentators that such a eulogization of Rushdie as one who has finally given voice to a silent, mute nation is not only wrong but foolishness.

Rushdie's first novel Grimus was a commercial failure and Rushdie himself and critics have offered various explanations regarding this failure: all of which converge on the point that the novel lacked a habitus and the East/West fusion was not adequate as it was in Midnight's Children. In Rushdie's own words in the novel, it is because he is still "looking for a suitable voice to speak in".[20] It can be understood that the voice he is speaking about is a voice that would fit the horizon of expectations of metropolitan audience. This expectation is all the more crucial and insistent when it comes to diasporic fictions, a certain ideal type created by the metropolitan critics. Almost all Rushdie critics have underlined this lack of a suitable voice in Grimus as the main reason for its failure.

Catherine Cundy considers Grimus a "product of a period when Rushdie had not yet achieved the synthesis of diverse cultural strands and narrative forms".[21] Timothy Brennan, on the other hand, thinks that Grimus "fails even though it is carried off with professional brilliance simply because it lacks a habitus".[22] James Harrison is of the view that Rushdie in Grimus "has not yet found either the theme or the style that will allow him to be the writer that he would in time become".[23] D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke also considers Grimus a failure. In his view, Grimus "satirizes ideas and social systems—but in abstract. The next stage is to locate this in the real world".[24] All these critics consider Grimus a failure, not because it is not well written, or because it does not tell a good story, but simply because it is too abstract. Readers are seeking the attributes found in other diasporic novels.

The same critical approach, albeit with some modifications, can be traced in the scholarship about Midnight's Children, Rushdie's second and most successful novel. It seems that for the critics what Rushdie starts in Grimus—the fusion of East and West—finally matures into a respectable technique. One reason why most critics find Midnight's Children a great work of art is simply because of its varying intertexts and because it has exactly the type of subjects and themes that a postcolonial work is supposed to have: allegory, corrupt rulers, abuses of power, magic, and myth. Since the novel has a habitus in India, borrowing Brennan's term from above, it makes it all the more palatable to the reader. Catherine Cundy considers Midnight's Children an improvement over Grimus because in Midnight's Children, Rushdie finally "achieves a successful fusion of East and West in terms of both form and content".[25] This statement seems to reassert the assumption about the postcolonial novel which has now become the norm in the counter-canon—cultural fusion in order to reach a

wider audience. By perpetuating myths about the East—in this case India—the critics offer the same public an extended image of the East, which through association with the earlier works could lead them to assume anything. The fetishization of the market was extended by the critics and academic world regarding Rushdie's novel.

The marketing of books is often beyond the control of their authors; nonetheless, dust jackets sometimes offer amusing evidence of the audience that publication houses, if not authors, wish to reach. The market strategies and the blurbs raise important questions about the location of the South Asian literary text in the western(ized) imaginary, academy, and journals. Like Rushdie's novel the works of Tharoor and Mistry were also packaged and marketed as documents recounting the exotic, myth-laden, corrupt country with ruthless governments and fledgling democracies. Tharoor's novel The Great Indian Novel recounts Indian history through the frame of the epic Mahabharata. In it he makes numerous allusions and intertexts to satirize and criticize the failures and abuse of power of the postcolonial political leaders and the weakening of the democratic ethos. But most of the press-reviews of the novel displayed a tendency to emphasize its epic, mythical presentation of India, and tried to turn the complex material of the novel into familiar, form by comparing Tharoor with other Anglo-European writers.

Olivier Bernier found it "utterly fascinating" and hailed it as "a great Indian novel".[26] While John Calvin Batchelor compared Tharoor as a satirist to "Skvorecky, Aksyonov, Voinovich, Fuentes and our own Coover,"[27] Earleen Fisher found a lot of parallels between Swift's Gulliver's Travels and Tharoor's novel.[28] The propensity for fetishizing is all the more apparent in the remarks of Edward Hower in The Chicago Tribune:

> An outrageous feast, spilling over myths, rhymes, tales of ancient treachery and wisdom, and tales of modern foolishness and heroism...An ambitious and often eloquent retelling of India's wildly original history...[with] modern and ancient drama woven into this wildly original extravaganza.[29]

For Hower, it is an extravagant entertaining tale of myths, legends and heroism, and assures the Western readers that they can read it for pure fun without any obstacle in matters

of cultural or historical translatability because, as he says, "We need no special knowledge of India" to enjoy this novel.[30]

The blurb of the American edition of Vikram Chandra's novel Red Earth and Pouring Rain declared that the novel offers readers the story of "an eighteenth-century warrior poet (now reincarnated as a typewriting monkey) and an Indian student home from college in America...[and] ranging from bloody battles in colonial India to college anomie in California, from Hindu gods to MTV".[31] The Sunday Times of London described Chandra as one with a "visionary"imagination and praised the epic grandeur and desolation. On the other hand, Times Literary Supplement praised its depiction of characters which comprise of gods, monkeys, Indians, and Englishmen.

In a scenario fit to be called "new Orientalism", these texts are presented as exotic, interesting, fascinating cultural objects by the publishing houses to be consumed by metropolitan/Western readers already immersed in the idea of a stereotyped India. While the writers are writing oppositional narratives, rewriting history and the nation, in an attempt to subvert colonial and nationalist discourse, the publishing houses and the global markets give them the same garbs which they are trying to shed. Graham Huggan points out how the oppositional aesthetics and anti-colonial projects undertaken by postcolonial writers are being subsumed and disempowered by the market and metropolitan publishing industries:

> ...metropolitan book businesses, always eager for "hot" new writers, merchandise the latest literary products from "exotic" places such as Africa and India, assimilating "marginal" literatures to an ever-voracious mainstream, and plying a moderately lucrative trade—in straightened economic circumstances—by transporting cultural products seen as coming from the peripheries to an audience that sees itself as being located at the center.[32]

Huggan gives the example of the popular "Heinemann African Writers Series" (Heinemann being the largest publisher and distributor of African literature in English.). He notes the role of Heinemann in bringing African writers to the limelight, but points out that

> ...the "Africa" that it promotes arguably differs from the one that its writers present; for while these writers mostly see themselves as *demystifying* African

> cultures, Heinemann's marketing policies continue, to some extent, to cater to Euroamerican myths. This mythicized "Africa" remains a profitable source for the marketing of cultural "otherness"—the very "otherness" on which the Western academy is currently fixated.[33]

The exoticizing tendency of the global market is manifested in various ways, as we have seen above. In the case of Indian novels in English, the Raj nostalgia is invoked and highlighted, sometimes inappropriately. Siddhartha Deb's debut novel The Point of Return is a significant contribution in that it memorializes the rarely written about aspect of another face of Partition. But problem occurs when we look at the way the book was presented to the world. The cover of the novel is adorned with the cliché of the wall with peeling paint, a visual tie to the Picador edition of Rushdie's Midnight's Children, which is intended to convey something of the faded elegance of the Raj. But the novel is not simply about colonial hangover or simply Raj nostalgia, as evoked by the cover, but goes much beyond these "interesting" subjects, and is, instead, an excellent meditation on the nature of memory and of the elusiveness of home. Moreover, the cover and back cover of The Point of Return contain review excerpts from such leading British and American publications like Times Literary Supplement, Sunday Times, Independent on Sunday, and New York Times, giving the "'metropolitan' stamp of approval to the postcolonial subject, thereby a novel dealing with some urgent issues of a relatively ignored region of India to the same, familiar, appealing postcolonial label".[34]

The image of a stereotyped India is distributed by the cover of Shauna Singh Baldwin's novel What the Body Remembers, a novel dealing with the Partition of India. In the cover of the Heinemann edition, we see a beautiful woman in traditional Indian dress against the background of a map of undivided India, mostly the north-western part. In the chapter on the representation of nation in Indian English writing, we discussed how the nation is often conceived in gendered terms. Especially in times of war and crisis, women are regarded as the bearer of collective honour, and as a symbol of the purity of the nation. Baldwin, in the novel, deals with the horrors of the Partition and its effects on the women, how the bodies of women were tortured, mutilated and destroyed in the name of communal identity and honour. The cover of the book implies the same stereotype—the beautiful woman

as a mirror-image of the map of the nation which is about to be re-written, marked and cut to pieces like that of the body of the woman.

Sometimes the writers themselves are turned into objects. In an essay on the neo-Orientalist tendency regarding the cultural objects from India, Saadia Toor examines the media hype around Arundhati Roy's novel The God of Small Things and the ways in which Roy's biography and photographs were used as tools to market the book:

> Marketing for the book has been dominated by glossyphotographs of a very photogenic Roy, wispy tendrils of hair framing eyesthat stare dreamily out. One publicity poster for the book has a four- footimage of Roy's face, beneath which is the caption 'Set to be the publishing sensation of the year', leaving much ambiguity as to whether the referent is Roy or her book, which is not mentioned even by name. The strategy isclearly one which plays into the Indian beauty myth, recently bolstered bythe simultaneous success of two Indian women on the international beautyscene as Ms World and Ms Universe, 1996, followed by another title in1997.[35]

Thus the market shapes and directs postcolonial literature in particular ways to serve its own purpose of fetishization and increasing consumption. Academic institutions and the critics based in First World academia also play a decisive role in this commodification of postcolonial texts by reading them according to certain prescriptive frameworks and narrow aesthetic and theoretical paradigms, as we have seen in the case of the critics' reception of Rushdie's two early novels Grimus and Midnight's Children. The academic institutions canonize certain particular versions of national and historical representations from formerly colonized countries. The location, background and critical enterprise of postcolonial critics and theorists are issues that become crucial in understanding the politics of canon formation and valuation of postcolonial writings.

It is the western academic structure which dominates the field of postcolonial studies, and it, through the voices of the theorist, also dictates its framework and canons. In fact, Arif Dirlik suggests, "postcoloniality is the condition of the intelligentsia of global capitalism".[36] Despite the many loopholes in Dirlik's arguments, he points out several crucial and disturbing characteristicsof the dominant strain in postcolonial studies: its presentism, its deliberate

crafting in the crucible of First World academic needs, and its constitution by what it cannot or often does not directly name: global capitalism. Kwame Anthony Appiah defined postcoloniality in the following terms:

> Postcoloniality is the condition of what we might ungenerously call a *comprador* intelligentsia: a relatively small, Western-style, Western-trained group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery.[37] [Italics in original].

Both Dirlik and Appiah actually point out the links between the locational factor and the critical and creative enterprise of postcolonial critics and writers.

The Western academy, critics and theorists based there, more often than not, have from the very emergence of the postcolonial studies, favoured those texts that are characterized by anti-realist, fabulative, postmodern techniques. Such texts are highly sought after by the global market because of their so-called novelty and exceptionalism. Novelty, with its attendant formula of syncretism and hybridity, is also regarded as the dominant measure of value in the academic realms. Deepika Bahri says, "the quintessentially hybrid, the exiled, the dislocated and multilocated" is "the 'postcolonials' of metropolitan definition".[38] Critics and theorists glorify and texts displaying "heterogeneous narrative styles" and "extravagant innovation", whereas more conventional modes of writing, "deemed uncongenial to metropolitan taste are un-translated and largely un-discussed within the academies".[39] If themarket is "the First Cause of contemporary thinking," Salman Rushdie'soft-quoted phrase is the default formula of this mode: "Mélange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world".[40]

According to Martina Michel, the texts being most often canonized as representative of postcoloniality "tend to be texts that satisfy Western (postmodern) criteria of evaluation. They are experimental, make extensive use of irony, resist closure, question traditional boundaries, employ intertextual strategies etc".[41] More conventional mode of writings such as realism are demonized or repressed as realist literature is deemed to be not very distanced from imperial ideology. Realist texts are ignored and implicitly deemed "less" representative of the postcolonial for the supposed lack of subversive potential. Deepika Bahri talks about "a

web of professional practices that include publishing, book reviews, syllabus exchange, conferences" which produces "a pattern of privileging texts more readily responsive to 'authorized' questions and pedagogic imperatives".[42]

Thus we see an institutionalized act of exclusion, covered up by a ritualized and formulaic radical practice. Only those writers writing about the nation and history and those who write in anti-realist mode make it to the narrow cannon of Indian English writing. In this cannon, Indian English writers Rushdie, Mistry, Tharoor and Ghosh are undoubtedly the most preferred ones.

The valorisation of "national allegories" and anti-realist texts as the most authentic texts of postcoloniality by critics and academicians in the Western academia has been criticized by many. Arun P. Mukherjee writes:

> I am worried by the postmodernist tendency to valorize antirealist fiction. When critics like Catherine Belsey and Linda Hutcheon suggest that antirealist fiction 'denaturalizes' what we had taken to be real and this warns us against being sucked into the illusionist trap set by realist presentation by constantly drawing attention to its process (...) I feel like telling them that afterawhile, the metafictions of postmodernism stop having that effect because of our increasing familiarity with their stylistic manoeuvres. Secondly, for those of us who never experienced realism as a dominant form, the 'denaturalizing' of metafiction does not affect us in the same way. Thirdly, I do not believe that there is any necessary link between autoreflexive fiction and right politics.[43]

In his introduction to his edited anthology, The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature (2001), the Indian novelist, poet and critic Amit Chaudhuri vehemently contests postcolonial fiction's alliance with postmodernist modes of narration, in magic realism, in poststructuralist self-referentiality and the Jamesonian national allegory. In the context of Indian English writing, he says that this alliance makes for a privileging of historical discourse over the literary, culminating in the depiction of Indian history as "a fancy dress-party or the Mardi Gras, full of chatter, music, sex, tomfoolery, free drinks and rock and roll".[44]

In another collection of essays Clearing a Space,Chaudhuri attempts to chart out a sort of alternative canon and an aesthetic tradition unlike the one proposed by western postcolonialism. He makes it clear that this is the tradition in which to best view his unusual fiction. Distancing himself and his writings from ongoing assumptions about postcolonialism and postmodernism, which has rejected high for popular culture, Chaudhuri claims to continue a tradition of Bengali modernism and high culture traceable to Tagore and earlier, and that this has its own characteristics. The book is addressed to the academic community in the West and in it he offers his claim of a vital Bengali modern culture, thereby clearing the "Space" for an alternative tradition freed from the heavy hand of the western academy. Amit Chaudhury praises poets and writers like Arun Kolatkar, R. K. Narayan and V. S. Naipaul, and in them he seeks other traditions of modern Indian writing than Rushdie's Midnight's Children and magic realism; Indian modernism learned how to use the vernacular before the self-conscious fireworks of postmodernism.[45]

Aijaz Ahmad points out the common attributes that are being sought by the critics in creating a postcolonial canon of counter-canonical works:

> The essential task of a 'Third world' novel it is said, is to give appropriate form (preferably allegory, but epic also, or fairy tale, or whatever). The range of questions that may be asked of the texts which are currently in the process of being canonized within this categorical counter-canon must predominantly refer, then, in one way or the other to representation of colonialism, nationhood, postcoloniality, the typology of rulers, their powers, corruptions, and so forth. What is disconcerting, nevertheless, is that a whole range of texts which do not ask those particular questions in any foregrounded manner would then have to be excluded from or pushed to the margins of this emerging counter-canon.[46]

The growing self-critical stance within the ranks of postcolonial studies has given rise to what Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks calls a "melancholia" which she relates to a series of problems such as:

> postcolonial scholars' apprehension that institutionalizing the critique of imperialism may render it conciliatory (...) their criteria for political self-legitimization (i.e., the impossibility of representing the Third world as an anti-imperialist constituency, especially in the face of the retreat of socialism) and their peculiar immobility as an effective oppositional force for curricular change within (American and British) academies.[47]

The new-found authority, popularity and status of postcolonial studies have paradoxically given rise to a mounting sense among practicing critics that the discipline has become "stereotyped as an acceptable form of academic radicalism".[48] She points to an uncritical and undifferentiated construction and reification of postcolonial marginality or Third World multiculturalism or radicality. At a time when postcolonial marginality, multiculturalism and hybridity have received wide acceptance and institutional legitimization, we see fetishization and reification of the margin as the new signpost of radicalism.

The danger of institutionalization haunts the contemporary field of postcolonial studies in the age of global commodification. Corporate houses, institutions—both academic and literary—play their respective roles in canonizing certain kinds of texts and writers by passing judgments on them. In the next section we are going to examine how another institution—that of international literary prizes is implicated in this commodification of postcolonial novels.

II.

In the age of globalization and the spread of consumer culture, cultural objects, in our case novels and writers, often fall victim to fetishization which makes the field of postcolonialism a hotly sought-after commodity. Postcolonial discourse has long been characterized by soul-searching and Indian writers in English, in their project of writing alternative histories are marked with admirable counter-discursive politics. But it must not be

ignored that the postcolonial slides, sometimes invisibly, yet inexorably, into a form of colonial nostalgia. While the publishing industry is one such institution engaged in the circulation of "exotic" cultural commodities, the other insidious institution is related to the prize culture. In this short section, we are going to examine how this prizing culture is related to the issue of putting values to postcolonial novels. Postcolonial novels are celebrated and lauded by the reading public and the academic world after winning international prizes. It is as if these prizes and the multinational companies that patronize these prizes are the ultimate judges as to what is to be read and admired and celebrated.

There is a big contradiction within the field of postcolonialism and it is all the more pronounced in the overlaps between commercial and academic responses to the postcolonial exotic. Graham Huggan reveals this phenomenon in his highly acclaimed book The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins (2001), where heexplores the compromised history of the Booker Company. The origins of the Booker-McConnell company lies in its colonial operations in Guyana in the nineteenth century. Huggan notes the contradiction inherent in the functioning of the award: on the one hand, the Prize opens the field of literature in English to include writings from the so-called peripheries; on the other, it succeeds in containing any possibility of radical cultural critique in these texts "by endorsing the commodification of a glamorized cultural difference".[49] It propagates the culture of selling exoticism by celebrating cultural difference. Huggan points out the ways the Booker's glamorization of "Raj nostalgia" is itself internally divided. While such nostalgic texts offer a revisioning and critique of past colonial histories, they also recuperate the ambiance of an exotic place/time of imperial splendour.

Huggan exposes the politics of the prize by examining its strategies of replicating older historical forms of cultural imperialism. He suggests, "postcoloniality implies a condition of contradiction between anti-colonial ideologies and neo-colonial market schemes".[50] The crux of his arguments (which have found resonance among postcolonial critics all over the world) seems to be that institutions such as the Booker have led "to the marketing of exotic writings to the Western world, rather than to the development of a body of postcolonial literature".[51] Before Huggan also critics like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Aijaz Ahmad had been concerned with just such facets of metropolitan cultural consumption. Aijaz Ahmad has constructed his attacks on metropolitan practitioners of post-colonial theory

in a similar vein as Huggan, suggesting that commercial viability inevitably undermines the force of anti-colonial critiques offered by postcolonial fiction and criticism.

From the very beginning of its inception in 1969, the Booker Prize was has been conferred mostly on writers writing about India, Raj nostalgia, and postcolonial nation-state—themes that find wide acceptance among Western readers hungry for exoticism. In 1971, V.S. Naipaul, the Indian Trinidadian writing about displaced ethnic Indians won the Booker for In a Free State. In the following seven years, three of the winning novels were about the Anglo-Indian colonial experience (all authored by non-Indians): The Siege of Krishnapur by J.G. Farrell (1973), Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's Heat and Dust (1975), and Paul Scott's Staying On (1978). Certainly the burgeoning Raj nostalgia, which later reached its peak in Great Britain in the early eighties, can be seen as part and parcel of Booker's early emphasis on Anglo-Indian life. The revisionist historical perspectives that inform these three novels by non-Indians can certainly be criticized for their hermetic views of Indian history—generally narrated as an internal failure within the culture of the colonizer, and, as such, reiterating the denial of Indian historical agency.

Big multinationals like the Booker, through its selected panellists (white male, in the words of Huggan) confer legitimacy and value to the literary products from the former colonies. In the words of Huggan these " writers wish to strike back against the center, yet they also write and are marketed for it; they wish to speak from the margins, yet they are assimilated into the mainstream; they wish to undo the opposition between a European Self and its designated Others, yet they are pressed into the service of manufacturing cultural Othernes".[52]

In the past twenty-five years the prize has been awarded to four Indians, Rushdie in 1981, Arundhati Roy in 1997 and most in 2006 to Kiran Desai for her novel The Inheritance of Loss, and more recently to Arvind Adiga in 2008 for his novel The White Tiger. In addition, diasporic Indian authors regularly appear on the short list (of six to seven novels) that comes out several months before the prize is actually awarded, and which leads to rampant speculation and odds-making in the weeks and days before the winner is announced. Anita Desai (three times) and Rohinton Mistry (twice) have appeared on the short-list while, in addition to his 1981 Booker, Rushdie has been short-listed four times. In 1993, Vikram Seth's A Suitable Boy caused a stir by not being nominated for the Booker, despite numerous

predictions that it would be the odds on favourite to win. Two things worth noting here: first, the prominent place of India as a setting and subject for fictions celebrated by the Booker; second, the number of (primarily diasporic) Indians who have authored works that draw the Prize Committee's attention.

Probably the most celebrated of all Booker Prize winners is Midnight's Children which has become central to the study of postcoloniality. The novel has proven to be remarkably prescient in anticipating many of the exigencies of postcolonial theoretical and critical thought and remains highly relevant, some twenty-five years later, to the body of literary and cultural criticism whose existence was catalyzed by its appearance. In 1993 Midnight's Children was awarded the "Booker of Bookers", as the most influential novel to receive the literary prize in the first twenty-five years of its existence.

This is not to accuse the writers of bad faith or of blatant opportunism; it is merely to insist that postcolonial writing be seen in its requisite material context, as part of a wider process in which the writers' anti-imperial sentiments must contend with imperial market forces. Postcolonial writing beguiles the line between resistance and collusion; the best-known writers are those like Rushdie or, from a different perspective, Naipaul who understand how to manage the realpolitik of metropolitan dominance. It is no surprise to find, then, that both writers are former Booker winners. For Naipaul, the Booker confirmed an already well-established reputation; for Rushdie, it was instrumental in bringing him to the public eye, where he has remained ever since, acquiring the dubious status of a "canonical" postcolonial writer. The Booker helped both writers. Norbert Schurer in his book Midnight's Children: A Reader, gives statistics of how the fortunes of any prize-winning novel soar, by giving Midnight's Children's example. He claims that before the Prize, only 650 copies of the first print run of 2,500 books were ordered in advance, whereas, after the announcement of the Prize, the sales rocketed to about one thousand copies in one month.[53]

Though Rohinton Mistry has never won the Booker, he was nominated twice, and the fact that he was shortlisted for the Prize and the fact that his novel was lauded in the "Oprah Winfrey Show" definitely helped his wider popular reception. Arbind Adiga's The White Tiger is a recent example of this phenomenon. In this age of globalization and multiculturalism, the representation of society through texts may not hold as much value as it

used to centuries ago, when texts were primarily the only window to the world. Yet, in the contemporary world, when these representations beget international literary prizes, they invite scrutiny and speculation. Three images of the Indian that are recognizable, acceptable and saleable by the West are of poverty, hopelessness and mystery.

It is deplorable to note that Western imagination still retains the same old image and assumption of the Orient and the Oriental in contemporary world of literature and cinema. The two recent evidences of this credence are-the 2009 Golden Globe award and the Oscar Award for the Best Motion Picture to "Slumdog Millionaire" and the 2008 Booker Prize for Literature to Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger. Both the works offer a realistic tribute to India by presenting her as a metaphor for the sad, bad and the poor. In both the cases, whoever their creators are, accolades have come from the Western world. These accolades have once again put India on the world cultural map as the site of celebrity squalor. Vikas Swaroop's novel Q&A, the movie's inspiration and Adiga's novel had earlier failed to grab much attention from the Indian media but with the stamps of approval from the Western world, they both experience exponential growth in book sales in the national as well as international markets.

III.

Another crucial aspect to this complex issue of market-appropriation and stereotyping of Indian English novels is the adaptation made by the writers themselves to the expectation and demands of metropolitan consumers and markets. The writers, at times, play to the tune of the market and it is evidence enough that Indians themselves are turning the Orientalist gaze back upon themselves. Critics and theorists, including Huggan, reveals the ways in which the "native informants" themselves contribute to the commodification of an "Indian" authenticity. What this implies is that there are traces of elisions, ambivalences, and complicities in the project of the writers themselves, and that there are certain pitfalls and cracks in the texts themselves.

While Western societies commodify the margins as a means of affirming the security of a lost yet longed for authenticity, the writers themselves at times add to the market-fuelled stereotype and Orientalism by producing and propagating stereotyped, saleable images of India and its history. Huggan's book again sets the standard for exploring this line of analysis. He has explored at length the ways Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy have contributed to their own celebrity status, illustrating the ways many ostensibly postcolonial novels (often read for their representation of a localized cultural other) deconstruct their own postcoloniality. This section briefly analyses some of the texts under study, including Midnight's Children, and illustrates how they have become complicit in the project of packaging India and its history in ways that seek to fulfil the expectations and demands of global consumers.

There is a widespread suspicion against Indian writers writing in English that they become Orientalists to cater to their international audience, that they "capitalize on their ethnic identity in ways that both pander to immigrant nostalgia and offer images of India that are packaged for easy consumption in the West. The exoticized cultural images, the critique claims, are, rather than a presentation of the national condition, in effectdetails of banal particularities devoid of history and politics".[54]The exoticism critique is underpinned by charges of bad faith, and of a certain complicity with colonialist and elitist ideologies. Nor such a critique is without any basis, as can be seen from the ways the writers present Indian history as endless cycle Tharoor, Chandra), and the nation as plural, unchanging, and its continuous regeneration (Rushdie, Sahagal) —some of the tropes familiar to the metropolitan readerly expectations.

In an interview, Salman Rushdie spoke about his personal view of India:

> In a country like India, you are basically never alone. The idea of solitude is a luxury which only rich people enjoy. For most Indians the idea of privacy is very remote. When people perform their natural functions in public, you don't have the same idea of privacy. So it seemed to me that people lived intermingled with each other in a way that perhaps they don't anymore in the

west, and that it was therefore idiotic to try and consider any life as being discrete from all other lives.[55]

In the interview, he goes on to trace the impact of this view on his art, precisely the making of Midnight's Children. This view essentializes India as a static, petrified concept that has not changed through the centuries. It perpetuates the common image of India among Westerners: that in India there is no privacy; it's a place of crowd and chaos; people here perform the "natural functions in public" which could imply anything from people urinating in public, to copulating on the street.

So it seems that not just the critics but the writers also engage, knowingly or unknowingly, in exoticization in their writings. Consequently, when these same writers are lauded by the critics as "native informant" the critics offer the public an extended image of the East, which through associationwith the earlier works could lead them to assume anything. It is in such circumstances that the academic/critical treatment and reception of postcolonial literatures "run the risk of encouraging a kind of licensed intellectual tourism".[56]

Moreover, it has been pointed out by critics that in spite of his subversive and ironic fiction, there is a blatant tendency for exoticization in Rushdie's novels. There is an abundance of exotic images which, critics, point out, are used by Rushdie playfully to exploit readerly expectations. Huggan, for example, points out how Rushdie in Midnight's Children "exhibits and hawks the wares of Western literary exoticism".[57] Apart from the "familiar semiotic markers of Orientalism"[58] like snake charmers and stammering saddhus, characters and descriptions of exoticism, Rushdie employs some less likely but still readily identifiable totems: the spittoon, for instance. In the words of Huggan,

> These totems advertise their status as culturally "othered" artifacts. The novel's narrator, Saleem Sinai, points out their value as commodities; for Rushdie's master of ceremonies is also a skillful merchant. Swallow me, says Saleem Sinai, and you swallow the lives of countless others.[59]

Saleem/Rushdie represents India as an object for consumption through frequent uses of the metaphor of eating, swallowing and food. Rushdie's narrative is highly charged with

imageries of food and consumption. Indeed, the "chutnification of history" can be read as a meta-commentary on the production and consumption of postcolonialliterature from the subcontinent. In Midnight's Children, the basic image is that of food and spice which is used by Rushdie to maximum effect. The exotic pickles that Saleem produce for the market is synonymous with the colourful history of postcolonial India.

Another writer who has enjoyed immense success and fame in the West is Rohinton Mistry. Two of his first novels Such a Long Journey and A Fine Balance won many accolades and prestigious awards and both were shortlisted for the Booker. All of his works drew rave reviews from the Western media, and Mistry even appeared on the Oprah Winfrey show after the publication of his book Family Matters. Considering that Mistry write about a minority community, the Parsis, his popularity in the West has been questioned by many. Robert L. Ross, an admirer of Mistry asks a crucial question in this regard:

> ...are Western readers just plain curious about the Parsis? After all, they are probably most widely known for a single practice: the way they dispose of their dead by leaving them in a tower for vultures to feast on. This ceremony receives full attention in Such a Long Journey, which presents all the gruesome details along with the ritualistic.[60]

Very frequently Mistry tends to look back nostalgically to the homeland he had left behind, and this nostalgia and insistence of ethnic roots give his narrative a quaint and exotic tint. An instance can be seen in the elaborate Doongervadi scene in Such a Long Journey, which immediately follows an episode so poignantly rendered that this description of the Zorastrian rites of the dead comes as an irrelevant appendage.

Many times, in an attempt to bring across the facts within the framework of a novel, Mistry creates contrived dialogue, such as the extra, "Did I mention in my last letter I am working for Research and Analysis Wing?" (SALJ 91) to explain the acronym, "RAW," or the "RAW is the Indian Secret Service. Jimmy is no scientist, he is a double-o-seven," on the next page. Mistry seeks to explain to readers concepts which most Indians would surely already know:

> "That's true," said Gustad. "Pakistan is very important to America, because of Russia".
>
> "But why?"
>
> Gustad illustrated the geopolitical reality. "Look, this samosa plate is Russia. And next to it, my cup—Afghanistan. Very friendly with Russia, right? Now, put your cup beside it, that's Pakistan....Nothing south of Pakistan, only the sea. And that's why America is so afraid. If Pakistan ever becomes Russia's friend, then Russia's road to the Indian Ocean is clear". (SALJ 92)

Such naïve illustrations are clearly intended for the Western readership unfamiliar with the political and social realities of the sub-continent.

It has also been pointed out that Indian writers in English very often tend to stereotype the nation in their attempt to re-present it in perspectives other than the colonial and orientalist ones. The exoticism critique of Indian Anglophone literature foregrounds the fact that in the international market, Anglophone writers from the global South are usually treated as cultural ambassadors. The expatriate Indian writer or the anglicized writer at home, however, is often alienated from the very culture and people he supposedly represents. The writer then compensates for his lack of cultural connectedness by resorting to reductive constructs of the nation—a strategy leading to exoticization of subject.

Meenakshi Mukherjee in her essay "The Anxiety of Indianness" has argued that Indian English novels of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries creak under the heavy burden of the colonial language in the heyday of colonialism. These earlier Indian Anglophone writers used exoticism in their writings which signified their compulsion to provide a veneer of detachment from the indigenous context; whereas, in contemporary writers, exoticism is often the outcome of their anxiety to be viewed as authentic. Writers in the regional languages were writing politically charged fiction which articulated the growing anti-colonial nationalistic sentiments. During the same time, writers in English steered clear of political engagements that might antagonize their potential audience. Using the English language, it was not possible to assert a regional identity, and "any assertion of a broadly Indian identity was undertaken generally to emphasize otherness and exoticity rather than to

make a political statement".[61] With time, the benign attitude to the colonialism of earlier writers has certainly changed. Now there is an anxiety to assert one's ethnic identity to a global audience. The charge of exoticism is intertwined with what Mukherjee calls an "anxiety of Indianness". The desire to prove one's "Indianness" leads to homogenized national narratives or exotic constructions of the nation.[62] Mukherjee's analysis is borne out in the works of writers such as Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan, whose works often betray an anxiety to offer a packaged image of the nation.

Vikram Chandra's novel Red Earth and Pouring Rain employs elements from Indian mythology in ways that betrays a desire to feed the western appetite for exotic images of India. In the novel Chandra contests Eurocentric narrative of objectivity, scientific clarity and linear progression by imposing the age-old Indian narrative of epic digression and circularity. In spite of the political implication of this resistant anti-European discourse, there is a palpable exoticization in Chandra's representation of the nation and Indian history. He emphasizes that Indian history is essentially mythical and follows a circular pattern—idcas most familiar to the Western psyche, courtesy the Orientalist construction of the nation. There is an abundance of playful intermingling of the mythic and the historical, where gods, monkeys and human beings play various roles in the narrative. In short, Chandra seems to have ratified the Eurocentric, Orientalist construction of a mythical, spiritual India that he intended to contest.

Reductive constructions of India are evident in the works of contemporary expatriate writers such as Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, in which images of their lost homeland rely heavily on easy and available constructs of India. Anis Shivani points to the emergence of a neo-orientalism in some recent novels such as Manil Suri's The Death of Vishnu and Amit Chaudhuri's Brave New World. He observes the complicity of Western critical culture in the production and popularity of such novels.[63] Nibedita Majumdar sums up the trends of charges by critics against Anglophone writers:

> Critics exhibit a twin tendency, first, to be very suspicious of anything political in the literary realm and, second, to glorify any display of cultural difference as deeply meaningful. It is not surprising that the novels, filled with paralyzed

characters untouched by the political sphere, basically dwell on inane cultural particularities like food, Bollywood movies, and spirituality.[64]

Perpetuation of old stereotypes and myths are sometimes rehearsed and reiterated by many self-declared feminist novels. Intending to speak for women, a novel like Shauna Singh Baldwin's What the Body Remembers paradoxically becomes implicated in perpetuating the status of women as oppressed. The common fact that Indian women are always abused and exploited at the hands of the males is given full expression in this novel. Girls are always unwanted, neglected and cast aside in favour of sons; even as she dies, the mother-in-law "pays" her son-in-law for having lived in married daughter's home; daughters are perceived as "guests" in their natal households, and that their marital families are their real families; education for girls is undermined. On many occasions, Baldwin's women lack souls as they are made to conform to the writer's idea of subservience and obedience. Basically, all females seem to exist in an irredeemably miserable condition, with too much bitterness and too little joy.

Yet, such myths about Indian females are now taken to be so self-evident that they are now enshrined as truth, rather than being received as ideas in need of sustained interrogation. It is true that discrimination exists and violence towards women is very common. What is not quite right with Baldwin's depiction of these women is that she seems to be suggesting that the situation described in the book uniformly describe the experience of all Indian women. At one point, Satya utters these lines: "Surely there will come another time when just being can bring *izzat* in return, when a woman will be allowed to choose her owner, when a woman will not be owned, when love will be enough payment for marriage, children or no children, just because her *shakti* takes shape and walks the world again" (WBR 345). But Satya's vision is not some utopia belonging to the future; there were women, even during her own time, who took part in the independence movement, women who fought for access to education, women who never succumbed to male dictates—in short, they lived the alternatives. What the Body Remembers reiterates prevalent sexist stereotypes. Despite her recuperation of the rarely-told story of the Sikh women during the Partition, she uses the stock images of oppressed women—perhaps because they are easily marketable and hold an undeniably anthropological appeal.

The novel repeats the well-rehearsed equation between Indian cultural patriarchy and female subordination. Like many feminist novels, it inadvertently closes the possibilities and reinscribes Indian women's subjugation, instead of creating new ways of being. One should not always need to write about this always-already-written script of gender in India to prove one's feminist credentials. Besides, merely exposing the deeply entrenched problems of sexism in India—which are by now widely known and also widely contested—other interventions and representations are crucial, if we want to arrive at a truly feminist literature. On the other hand, Bapsi Sidhwa's Ice-Candy Man, Anita Desai's Clear Light of Day and Mukul Kesavan's Looking Through Glass privilege female will, choice and conviction through some female activists who transcend this always-already-written script of gender in India, subvert the discourse of patriarchy by their courageous activism in times of crisis.

Nayantara Sahgal's Rich Like Us is also marked by some debilitating ellipses regarding the women question. Even though praised by critics like Jasbir Jain, Ramesh Chadha for its exploration of feminist concerns and social commitment, Sahgal's novel about the dark period of Emergency and its effects on women, at times, shows her alignment with prevailing nationalist paradigms and frequently subscribes to the trope of essential victimhood of women and the male characters as saviors. There is a disquieting generalization regarding the victimization of women, and she resorts to myth, especially the mythic figure of Sita to comment on the national question.

Another key motif used by Sahgal to depict the victimization of women is that of *sati*. The Ramayana legend of Sita and her mistreatment by Rama is invoked by Sahgal to comment of patriarchal structure of oppression. Sonali's great-grandmother commits suttee to ensure her son's welfare at the hands of her brothers-in-law; Mona, Ram Surya's senior wife, in despair over his infidelity with Marcella, attempts to set herself ablaze; women laborers are kidnapped for sexual slavery by corrupt businessmen and policemen; and Rose, Ram's English junior wife, is murdered because she possesses too much knowledge about her stepson Dev's illegal undertakings. Thus, we see an enumeration of excesses against women which suggests Sahgal's urge to show female agency in its most helpless and victimized state. Of course, she intends to honestly portray the problems of women of India; but the way she does it raises questions. Sahgal herself lapses into a nation-based patriarchal language, as seen in her appropriation of Sita.

Collapsing women's issues into the larger realm of "politics", Sahgal noted in an interview that "it is very difficult to separate [politics] from real life in India as the reality of life is so political here where women are roasted alive on their husbands' funeral pyre[s] and are burnt to death for dowry".[65] She thus discloses that, for her, women's experiences in general, and *sati* and dowry murders in particular, are merely the grounds upon which she bases her criticism of national politics.

Even though the novel is a powerful critique of the corrupt nation-state and the decaying democracy in India, Sahgal's politics sometimes show signs of the same nationalistic ideals which she seeks to dismantle in the first place. This weakness is most obvious in her handling of the Sita myth. For instance, the first reference to the Sita myth emerges in the context of a discussion on nationalist allegiances and is, significantly, voiced by a man. Relating his schizophrenia about being Indian and/or British to his dubiety regarding Hindu tradition, Keshav cites as an example of the debasement of the latter Rama's reprehensible treatment of Sita: "How am I supposed to know what's right for me to do—whose 'side' I'm on ...—if even what we worship needs second thoughts," he exclaims (RLU 60).

In another nation-based context years later, Rose wonders whether the wrongs of the Emergency can be explained away as acts of fate but concludes, "even if that's what it was—the powers who were supposed to know better sometimes being as vicious as they were, e.g. their barbarous treatment of Sita—of course it had to be fought" (RLU 219). Sita's tragedy is here reduced to a parenthetical remark to emphasize the corruption of a nation and a political system steeped in an oppressive religious tradition, thereby underlining once more Sahgal's appropriation of the legend for larger political ends.

This elliptic feminism and nationalism on the part of Sahgal is diagnosed by Harveen Sachdeva Mann to be "very much a product of her particular privileged heritage". According to Mann:

> Born into modern India's premier political family, the Nehrus, and brought up in a household in which female children did not feel the pressures of being female, Sahgal subordinates the woman question to the national question in the narrative. Ironically, but not surprisingly, her nationalist fealty is, in turn, complicated by her Western-style upbringing and education as well as her

location within an international rather than a local literary arena, resulting in multiple thematic antinomies in her novel.[66]

This charge of class elitism has always been put to Indian English writing. It has been pointed out that almost all the writers writing in English, especially those that won international recognition and status—Rushdie, Mistry, Tharoor, Sealy, Kesavan, Chandra—belong to privileged social and economic background, have been educated in the best schools and colleges in India and the West, and most of them are located in the metropolises of the West. It is often argued that the representation of India—the nation and its history that these writers do are far from authentic because they themselves are cut off from the reality of India by due to their location and class. They are the social elites and the history in their hands is often that of the elite section only.

The charge of class elitism is also brought against these writers. Critics also point out Rushdie's complicity with liberal capitalism via the socio-economic concerns of Saleem. More pointedly, M. Keith Booker, has argued that while Rushdean stylistics may undermine notions of rationalist linear historiography, in practice, novels like Midnight'sChildren serve to support Western liberal ideology while mocking or undermining adiscourse that would be truly radical or emancipatory, name that of Marxism. Neil ten Kortenaar likewise notesthat while Rushdie's formal elements may seem radical, in this case the destabilization of hegemonic historiography gives way to an ideology of liberal humanism that can hardly be considered radical. In fact, Rushdie's work tends to promote the same basic values asthose of the classic nineteenth century realistic novel, despite its stylistic departure.[67]

Eric Barlatsky points out a crucial aspect in the novel which reveal Rushdie's class politics. According to Barlatsky, "Saleem's story is precisely, it seems the story of the elite middle class that has always been told, even as it is a deconstruction of it. The exclusion of Shiva in this reading presents itself as yet another iteration of class hegemony".[68] In this context, it is worth noting that the protagonist of Midnight's Childrenis not the poor and downtrodden Shiva who sees the world in stark terms of class difference and is willing to use violence to rectify that difference, but is rather the bourgeois Saleem whose dreams of equality are balanced by his repulsion for Shiva and his attempts to excludeShiva from the story of which he is a central part.

Some Indian critics suspect that attendance at the Doon School, St. Stephen's College in Delhi, and then either Oxford or Cambridge, has produced the most prominent Indo-Anglian writers, and that they might therefore be reasonably described (whether they literally attended these schools or not) as a "Stephanian" school of Indian literature.[69] It is also implied that this elite upbringing and class background of the writers as well as their consequent location in Western metropolis play a crucial role in forming shaping their elite attitudes. Leela Gandhi acknowledges that such a simplistic pigeonholing must be taken with a large grain of salt, but very interestingly argues that

> ...a variety of historical and literary circumstances have made it possible—even imperative—for the postcolonial novel to narrate the nation through a distinctively Stephanian idiom...[M]ost 'Stephanian' novels are boringly—if skillfully—'indicative' of the sensibility through which the newly elite Indian middle-classes recognise their community in the nation. Very few challenge the limits of this sensibility, fewer still refuse the postcolonial middle-classes the narcissistic pleasures of self-recognition.[70]

Shashi Tharoor is among those who contend with that legacy, pro and con. In an article written for The New York Times he contends that "I write for anyone who will read me, but first of all for Indians like myself" (confirming Leela Gandhi's assertion of the pleasures of self-recognition). He writes in English because it expresses Indian diversity "better than any Indian language precisely because it is not rooted in any one region of my vast country....[and] because writers really live inside their heads and on the page, and geography is merely a circumstance".[71] In an article for The Stephanian he defended his schooling against implied charges of elitism, and concluded that "what is being described as 'Stephanian' writing is in fact characteristic of an entire generation of Indian writers in English, who grew up without the shadow of the Englishman judging their prose, who used it unself-consciously in their daily lives in independent India, and who eventually wrote fiction in it as naturally as they would have written their university exams, their letters home, or the notes they slipped to each other in their classrooms".[72] Shashi Tharoor's novel The Great

Indian Novel is, nevertheless, can be analyzed as a text that reveal elitist tendencies in its representation of Indian history.

Despite his sincere concern to present an alternative version of India and Indian history, Tharoor cannot claim to have found the "correct" formula for liberating the so-called working people. Tharoor's version ignores the plight of the vast underclass for whom independence merely suggested a ceremonial shift in power. In a sense, Tharoor's project of writing back to the centre sadly enacts the erasure of the subaltern or the underclass. Jenny Sharpe, in a perceptive analysis of figures of colonial resistance, points out the inherent contradictions of a middle-class "liberating" discourse such as Tharoor's:

> To think of the relation between the discourse centering on the production of the colonial subject and what it occludes as an eclipse is to see that the subaltern classes are not situated outside the civilizing project but are caught in the path of its trajectory... For the colonized subject who can answer the colonizers back is the product of the same vast ideological machinery that silences the subaltern.[73]

Tharoor's effort to answer the colonizer is dependent upon the material and discursive tools that are provided by the colonizer. The same ideological apparatus that provides him with a voice is inevitably caught up in silencing those who are less fortunate than Tharoor.

Despite the fact that the novel is a notable act of cultural recovery, Tharoor's epic historical narrative is exclusive in nature and it drains out the liberatory potential of the text. His narrative is not the testimony of a whole people. The historical version he offers concerns great men and is fashioned by a grand moral and ethical design: "In my epic I shall tell of past, present and future, of existence and passing, of efflorescence and decay, of death and rebirth; of what is and of what was, of what should have been" (TGIN 18). Such declarations are made in order to capture the mood of the epic, and it reduces counter-hegemonic possibilities of the text to a large extent.

But perhaps it is Tharoor's historical selection which makes any attempt to recover the struggles of the subaltern finally irrelevant. The banality of everyday life does not interest Tharoor or his narrator. Their India is the India of great men, of Gandhis and Nehrus. The all-

pervasive figure of Gandhi/Gangaji, the so-called enigmatic individual genius, is a diversion from the collective social forces that shape any age. His omnipresence is also juxtaposed, somewhat contradictorily, against mass spontaneous revolution. In this instance Tharoor presents a falsified notion of a spontaneous movement detached from a conscious leadership. Such beliefs only perpetuate historical myths and give the "masses a 'theoretical' consciousness of being creators of historical and institutional values, of being founders of a state".[74]

Tharoor's revisionist history furthers the "great men" myth of history and erases the politics of the people. As in the Mahabharata, where we learn nothing about the slaughtered soldiers on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, so in Tharoor's India we learn very little about the underprivileged foot soldier. Throor seeks to underplay this weakness by philosophizing about the unreliability of his historical knowledge: "There is no story and too many stories; there are no heroes and too many heroes. What is left out matters almost as much as what is said" (TGIN 411). But it is not enough to legitimize exclusion by claiming that the "political and governmental process in our country has always been distant from the vast mass of the people [and that] this has been sanctified by tradition and reinforced by colonialism" (TGIN 370). These words diffuse the nature of the problem within a vortex of "traditions" and sustain oppression. T. N. Dhar also comments that "... Tharoor's account is dominated by the leading lights of the day and is elitist in approach... Given what we have, all that we can say is that Tharoor's account is no more than an alternative version of the ectant elitist versions" that he seeks to contest.[75]

Ultimately, Tharoor is bound by his ideological position in modern India. Tharoor's nostalgia for the past, for "traditions" is evident in the novel, and this nostalgia can be related to the habitual preoccupations of the westernized, Hindu middle-class to which he belongs. He speaks of a past a past when India was the "land of Rama...the land where truth and honour and valour and dharma were worshipper as the cardinal principles of existence" (TGIN 411). This nostalgia is juxtaposed against his distaste for post independence failures.

This charge of elitism severely undermines the West's appropriation of these writers as the most authentic spokespersons of Indian history and nation. This charge of elitism is, very often, directed at the Subaltern Studies enterprise. We have already discussed the common lineages and point of convergences between these writers and these new breed of

historians. Since from the very beginning of this study relied heavily on the philosophical and theoretical ideas of the Subaltern School of historians, it is necessary to look at some of the loopholes, gaps and biases of this historical enterprise also. Like the postcolonial literary field, the Subaltern historical project is also marked with self-scrutiny—as some of the important figures associated with it turned into its most vociferous critics. In the next section, we look at the origin and development of the Subaltern historical project. It starts by underlying the revisionary nature of the project and its opposition to colonial and neo-colonial historiography which injected fresh insights into historical enterprise across the globe, and opened up new vistas to scholars and writers engaged in the representation of history. Later in the section, however, we point put to some of the weaknesses and gaps in the project.

IV.

The term Subaltern was taken from Gramsci's euphemism for the proletariat in his Prison Notebooks. However the Subaltern Studies collective used it as a catch-all term for all groups they viewed as oppressed—the proletariat, the peasantry, women, tribal people. The collective focussed on peasant and tribal struggles, little work being done on urban movements with the exception of Dipesh Chakrabarty's "Rethinking Working Class History" on the jute mill workers of Calcutta. But what was distinctive about their approach was the argument that these struggles, far from being creations of what they termed "elite nationalism", were independent of it and much more radical. Gyan Pandy, for example, in the first issue of the journal demonstrated convincingly, in a study of the 1921-22 peasant struggle in Awadh, how Congress, far from initiating the struggle, had attempted to undermine it because the peasants were targeting Indian landlords who Congress wished to incorporate in their pan-Indian alliance against the British.

However the Subalterns weren't simply interested in illustrating the "bourgeois" nature of India nationalism. They argued that movements from below had been hijacked by elite nationalism and subordinated to the nationalist project. When they wrote of combating grand narratives, it was the "grand narrative" of anti-colonial nationalism they were targeting.

Undoubtedly there was a very important core to their argument—essentially the "nationalist leadership" had attempted to use "highly controlled" struggles of the Indian masses in order to confront and then replace the colonial masters. But the collective's project had an even more ambitious aim: they wished to reconstruct peasant consciousness itself, and to demonstrate its autonomy from elite nationalist thought. In order to do so, they sought out both new sources and attempted to reread the traditional archives "against the grain", all with the aim of recreating the mental world of the peasant insurgent.

From the very beginning, the Subalternist projects was inspired by an oppositional discourse which envisioned a discursive resistance to colonial and neo-colonial silencing of the subaltern voice and agency. Their objective was to recover the lost, suppressed, neglected histories of the community, people or groups which do not generally figure in the grand histories of the colonial and nationalist kinds. R. John Williams outlines a three part trajectory of the overall objectives and methodology of Subaltern Studies: 1) There is an imposition of silence by a colonial or neocolonial state through mechanisms such as official historiography and middle-class discursive hegemony—a process fueled by domination and greed. This forced silence is largely the domain of the colonial elite, and is manifested in the entire field of discursive power in venues of official historiography, literature, journalism, documentation, etc. 2) an insurrectionary act of drawing attention to that silence, calling it out, mapping its genealogy, and identifying the hypocrisy of its boundaries—a process fueled by resentment. 3) a revisionary act of speak-ing from that silence, giving it a voice, an identity, and eliminating its absence—a process motivated by optimism (however naive). These last two trajectories are the domain of the postcolonial/subaltern scholar, writer, citizen, or intellectual. The processes and strategies invoked here take on similar shapes, mainly in revisionary historiography, literature, theatre etc.[76]

In a later, more reflective essay entitled "The Small Voice of History," Guha talks about the need for the Subaltern to develop an extra sensitive "ear" for certain "small voices" that he says are "drowned in the noise of statist commands".[77] For Guha, statism is the sinister vehicle for inflicting silence, and Subaltern Studies is the means to overcome that silence: it is up to us to make that extra effort, develop the special skills and above all cultivate the disposition to hear these voices and interact with them. For they have many stories to tell—

stories which for their complexity are unequalled by statist discourse and indeed opposed to its abstract and oversimplifying modes.

Although the descriptive language of the Subalterns is often quite different, the underlying revisionary impulse, and its implicit move along the postcolonial trajectory of silence, is more or less the same. Partha Chatterjee, for example, argues that the task of the Subaltern involves a "filling up" where there is "emptiness".[78] Rosalind O'Hanlon expands Chatterjee's metaphor, explaining that the Subaltern's objective is one of "making an absence into presences, of peopling a vacant space with figures".[79] Gyan Prakash talks of the Subaltern's attempt to "disclose [sometimes he uses the word "recover" (240)] that which is concealed".[80] Sumit Sarkar assigns the Subaltern the job of "widening horizons" in historical research.[81] Said talks of the Subaltern's penchant for restoring "missing narratives".[82] But whether one speaks of learning to hear "small" voices, letting hidden flowers bloom, filling up emptinesses, disclosing what has been concealed, widening horizons, restoring missing narratives, counteracting officially imposed ignorance, restoring autonomy, or simply giving a voice to the heretofore voice -less, one is essentially articulating the same revisionary impulse to write history "from below".

Sustained by an extraordinary sense of commitment, members of the Subaltern Studies Collective revitalized the writing of Indian history as perhaps no such movement had done before. Moreover, since most of their case studies unearthed new historical materials, early contributors made enormous contributions to our knowledge of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Indian history even while radically challenging earlier models of that history.

Over time however, the Subalterns began to shift their ground. The original project of the Subaltern Studies group was grounded in a Marxist perspective. Ranajit Guha spoke about the objective of this project: "It is the study of this historic failure of the nation to come to its own, a failure due to the inadequacy of the bourgeoisie as well as of the working class to lead it into a decisive victory over colonialism and a bourgeois-democratic revolution of the classic nineteenth-century type...it is the study of his failure which constitutes the central problematic of the historiography of colonial India".[83]

Subsequently, Subaltern Studies historians distanced themselves from Marxism, and moved towards a markedly post-foundationalist approach, in the tradition of Nietzsche, Derrida and Foucault. The influence of post-modernism and its offspring "post-colonial

studies" began to take its toll. In point of theoretical orientations, the subalternist and postmodernist intellectual traditions differed profoundly. While the former centered agency and voice on a very specific group—the marginalized, subaltern classes—the other diffused and decentered agency and rela-tivized knowledge in such a way as to question the possibility of any stable voice or collective consciousness among any social class. And while early subalternist historians viewed history in terms of the liberation and self-realization of subaltern classes, postmodernists challenged the linear and teleological structures that underlay all the meta-narratives of modern Indian history. The colonial narrative, from their perspective, was self-evidently teleological and Eurocentric, while the nationalist narrative, though assigning important roles to some Indian elites, had used European tropes of reason and progress to explain the transition from British to Indian rule and hence could not be embraced as authentically Indian. And Marxism deployed a universalist mode-of-production narrative that was dismissed as both teleological and Europe-derived.

In view of these profound differences in intellectual orientation, one might never have predicted that postmodernist perspectives would have made inroads in the Subaltern Studies Collective. By the mid-1980s, however, members of that group had begun rereading already known materials with a view to capturing their discursive modes and structures. This strategy had the effect of shifting the group from a positivist and empiricist orientation to one grounded more squarely in a literary criticism that draped itself in the banner of an amorphous, obscurantist phrasing: cultural studies. Disdaining the old tasks of literary criticism (which were after all honest and straightforward, and never claimed to be speaking for global cultures or transnational discourse), self-styled "cultural critics" became the trendy mint-masters of ambiguity and diversity. Bernard Cohn's essay in the 1985 volume of Subaltern Studies, "The Command of Language and the Language of Command," was, as the author acknowledged, "obviously influenced by the work of Michel Foucault."[84] And in the same volume Gayatri Spivak criticized subalternist historians for having adopted positivist methodologies and for treating the objects of their research—the subaltern classes—as enduring, essentialized categories, suggesting that the quest for a subaltern consciousness by these scholars had been misplaced and perhaps even futile. Nonetheless Spivak, herself a literary critic, urged historians to continue their efforts to recover subaltern consciousness even while knowing this was impossible, and to do so by deploying "a strategic use of

positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest."[85] Articles in subsequent volumes of Subaltern Studies reflected the new discursive approaches pioneered in the 1985 volume, while an increasing number of historians of India—both in Indian and Euro-American circles, and both inside and outside the Subaltern Studies Collective—began incorporating postmodernist perspectives into their scholarship.[86]

Typically, the method was to read historical records "against the grain," with a view to turning up new interpretations of elite projects, new evidence of smothered subaltern voices, or of counter-identities elaborated by marginalized intellectuals. But the effort to harmonize postmodernist methods of textual and literary analysis with the radical politics that had informed the early subalternist movement nonetheless proved difficult. At the second meeting of the Subaltern Studies Collective, held in Calcutta in January 1986, the split erupted in the open. On the one hand was the desire to discover and celebrate the radical politics of non-elites understood as autonomous actors in their own right; on the other, the desire to expose the discursive formulations—"colonial discourse," as it came to be known—through which British rule actually operated.

In 1992 Rosalind O'Hanlon and David Washbrook drew attention to this tension, remarking metaphorically that one could not simultaneously ride two horses— one a belief in fundamental rights embracing the possibility of human emancipation, and the other a postmodernist relativism that rejected any "foundational" ground on which such rights could rest. But Gyan Prakash responded to this challenge by insisting that for his own part, he would "hang on to two horses, inconstantly."[87] But was it really possible to straddle two opposing intellectual positions? This tension never disappeared; indeed, it surfaced repeatedly, for instance, at a conference on colonialism and culture held in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Recalled Nicholas Dirks, the conference organizer, "We kept trying to find new ways to rescue subaltern voices among the colonized, only to find that colonialism was about the history by which categories such as the colonizer as well as the colonized, elite as well as subaltern, became established and deployed."[88] In marked contrast to the efforts of the early Subaltern Studies Collective, Dirks then added, "And while not wishing to align our scholarship with power itself, many of us feared that the glorification of resistance trivialized the all-pervasive character of power, particularly in colonialregimes."[89]

For many conference participants, in other words, an all-pervasive colonial power had smothered the very subaltern classes whose voices and agency the founders of the Subaltern Studies Collective had so earnestly sought to recover. In both America and India, the study of such marginalized classes as constituted the original "subalterns" was thus gradually replaced by the study of the discourses of the elite groups that dominated them, as in Gauri Viswanathan's argument that British colonial hegemony in India rested ultimately on the teaching of English literature, and not on the exercise of direct force.[90] As Ramachandra Guha sardonically observed, Subaltern Studies had become "bhadralok studies"—that is, the study of elites.[91] Moreover, a majority of the case studies undertaken by these historians were based on Bengal. As such, with time, it was felt that the Subalternist project tilted heavily towards a Bengal-centric study which left out myriad of stories from other parts of the country. The Subaltern Studies Collective, a movement originally launched in an attempt to recover India's history from colonial, nationalist, and Marxist metanarratives, was ultimately taken over by an intellectual movement that, referring to the ways in which power and discourse were mutually implicated, ended up reaffirming the overwhelming centrality of the British intrusion in India.50 Still more ironic was that, in academe's current spirit of political correctness and anti-imperialist rhetoric, people who seem to have thought they were exposing the wicked ends and means of British domination were instead placing the entire explanatory weight of India's long history and complex socio-cultural institutions on a European discursive formulation that deprived Indians themselves of agency or the ability to make their own history.

Now the central theme of the group's work became not the hijacking of popular struggles in the interests of an aspiring Indian bourgeoisie nationalism, but the argument that the whole "nationalist" project was fundamentally flawed. In the name of "progress" and "modernity", the nationalists, after 1947, had imposed an oppressive centralising state on the "fragments" that comprise Indian society. So Partha Chatterjee, a key figure in the group, argues in The Nation and its Fragments that secularism and enlightenment rationalism are simply weapons in the armoury of the post-colonial state. Similarly Dipesh Chakrabarty insists that the very notion of a good society or of universal progress are "monomanias" that need to be junked in the name of the "episodic" and the "fragment". It is in this context that "community" began to replace "subaltern" as the focus of the collective's work.

"Community" was now privileged as the key source of resistance to the new hegemonic power. This has led to a celebration of local traditions for their own sake. But of course, in reality communities are not simply centres of resistance to an intrusive and oppressive state, but also source of oppression themselves—of class, gender and caste.

Such a perspective treads very dangerous ground. The BJP-led coalition government in the later part of the 1990s trumpeted an exclusivist "Hindu" nationalism and targeted all liberal, democratic and socialist thought as alien imports. Clearly the members of the collective loathe this new majoritarianism, and many of them have spoken out and campaigned against the Hindu right. Nonetheless their own championing of indigenous discourse, irrelevant of its content, and their attacks on Enlightenment thought as fundamentally oppressive, plays into the hands of those bigots that now govern India and who wish to create an authoritarian state based on "authentic Indian tradition".

V.

It is argued that Indian English writers have always worked under the burden of representing "Indianness" in their desire to attain authenticity and cater to the expectations the English speaking audience of the West. This search for authenticity in a linguistic medium that is spoken by only five percent of the population of India gives rise to a lot of complexities.

The very concept of an authentic, fixed "Indianness" or Indian identity is problematic, as we have discussed in the preceding chapters. The problem becomes more critical when the linguistic aspect enters this embattled territory. The vital question of authenticity—these cultural texts as reliable information to be consumed by the West comes in via the linguistic paradigm and this linguistic issue is closely related to the charge of elitism in Indian writing in English. Indian novels in English, although a distinctive and notable force in world fiction, constitute an obviously paradoxical genre in that creative expression of a nation is being sought in an alien medium even as the nation possesses a rich literary heritage of its own, both

oral and written, as also a plenitude of regional languages. One major reason for this is that the vernacular literatures are unable to attract a worldwide or even a nation-wide readership for lack of translations. Moreover, several Indian writers have been able to assimilate the social scenario of modern India in the throes of change and the complex dilemmas confronting it in its efforts to find solutions to the problems bedeviling it. They resort to a suitable medium to make their newly-found voice heard all over the world. In the following section we shall examine some of the linguistic issues related to the debate.

The adoption of English as an instrument of creative communication has ramifications beyond convenience. The debate over English is rooted in the legitimate concerns about the place of English in social and cultural reproduction.The fact that English-speaking people in India cut through class, caste, ethnic, religious, geographical and vernacular barriers illustrates that this unique literature has far outreached the scope conceived and foreseen by its pioneers.

The controversy over Indian writing in English was fuelled in recent times by writer/literary critic Salman Rushdie's declaration that work by Indian writers in English was "the most valuable contribution India has made to the world of books".[92] To validate this extravagant claim, Rushdie included only one writer of vernacular language in the anthology of Indian writing co-edited by Rushdie.[93] In his introduction to this anthology, Rushdie asserts that "the prose writing—both fiction and non-fiction—created in this period by Indian writers writing in Englishis proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the sixteen "official languages" of India; the so-called "vernacular languages," during the same time".[94]

Rushdie's remarks regarding the contemporary literature produced in the other officially recognized languages read by the millions of other Indians were definitely offensive. His view was justifiably countered vehemently by critics and intellectuals. "Salman playing literary Salieri to the vernacular Mozart?" asks S. Prasannarajan in The Indian Express.[95] Nandi Bhatia characterizes Rushdie's article as "problematic," and explains why it should be characterized this way:

> ...what made it really unpalatable was the irony that the success of contemporary Indian writing in English itself can, in large part, be attributed to the incorporation of the vernacular. It is precisely Rushdie's own interaction

> with the vernacular that gives, in part, his writing its unique ability to capture and comprehend snapshots of cultural and political realities in what he calls "CinemaScope and glorious Technicolour"...[H]is own writing and most of contemporary Indian writing itself functions as a reminder of—or, for that matter, the ignoring of—the significance of the vernaculars.[96]

It is ironic that he resorts to so many regional vernacular phrase in his writings, and at the same time he is also, according to Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, among those few South Asian writers in the West who do not display an anxious need to explain the unfamiliar to his western readers.[97]

Rushdie's claim was a preposterous one which completely elided the depth and range of Indian writing. The kind of Indian experience he talks about is the experience of urban, middle and upper-middle class India, united by its cosmopolitanism and its familiarity with English. This elite provenance of the English language in popularizing the postcolonial condition or representation of postcolonial history and nation has been naturalized by the wide circulation and consumption of Indian English writing by the minuscule English speaking class in India and the predominantly English speaking audience in the West.

There is only a tiny minority of the population well versed in English, yet English writings in India have attained wider recognition. The elite character of the English language in the Indian context was recognized by Mahatma Gandhi who spoke of the "gulf [that the English language] created between the educated classes and the uneducated masses".[98] Gandhi's characterization of English remains accurate in contemporary India where only about 5% of its massive population is conversant in English. It is the urban elite class which comprises of the majority of English speaking population. They learned English as if it were their native language, often at the expense of learning their native language. Falicity with English connotes an immediate social distance from the rest of India, even its literate vernacular sections. In a deeply hierarchical society with a strong colonial hangover, social attributes of the ruling class, such as language, acquire iconic stature. English is arguably the most sought after, the most desirable of all the languages in the country.

The Indian ruling class has established a defining role for English in key areas of public life, such as employment, education and media. The political issue of the desirability of

a language inaccessible to the overwhelming majority has been successfully shelved. Consequently, the test of a good education is considered to be a sound knowledge of English; similarly, competence in English is a necessity for a white collar job. Those who have little or no access to the language are perhaps the ones who best appreciate its power—they feel it in job interviews, in their children's schools, in court rooms, in hospitals, in community forums— they know they are powerless and socially marked. English is not merely a signifier of class in India; it is a facilitator of class rule. It is not surprising that Indian Anglophone literature is subjected to severe scrutiny given the extraordinary association of the language with class privilege. If the charge of exoticism is grounded in the distance between author and subject, it is to be expected that Anglophone writers are especially targeted on this issue.

In a sense, English is the only pan-Indian language because, while it is not associated with any particular region, the language maintains a presence all over the country. The pan-Indian aspect of the language, however, rarely translates into a sensibility that meaningfully engages with the national culture. Russian literature of the nineteenth century, Pankaj Mishra observes, offers a poignant contrast with Indian Anglophone literature. In a land marked by a colonial culture, much like India, uneven development, brutal class hierarchies, and people caught in the vortex of unmanageable forces, the Russian writers performed an indispensable function. They made their lived world their raw material and created a literature that the people could recognize to be their own. This, Mishra observes, is the "truest function of a national literature: it holds a mirror in whose unfamiliar reflections a nation slowly learns to recognize itself".[99] In contrast, the Indian Anglophone elite writer, even while writing about the social conditions, are not fully immersed in it. It is argued by many critics that Indian English writers inhabit a colonial class culture, and that their writings often show signs of evasiveness about these conditions.

This debate is a long one and has been there for a long time. Critical interest in the literary product has always been framed by the issue of the viability of an Indian literature in the language of its colonizers. The debate came to the forefront recently when two famous Indian English writers—Amit Chaudhuri and Vikram Chandra took the critics head-on in spirited defense of Indian English writings. Chaudhuri's essay "The East as a Career" (2006) and Chandra's "The Cult of Authenticity" (2000) ridicules all criticisms which speak of the anxieties of the use of English in Indian writing, and point to the exotic and elite strains in

such writings.[100] Amit Chaudhuri calls such criticism a recent one and without much critical content, with "no persuasive and intelligent debate ... on the nature of Indian writing in English".[101] Chandra rejects such criticism by calling it "nativist".

Chaudhuri offers an ambitious defense of Indian Anglophone writing. He begins by conceding what he believes is the central assumption behind the exoticism critique: because English is an elite language, there is a distance between the Indian English writer and her audience.[102] This distancebetween writer and audience, he holds, is what critics believe to be thecondition for the production of the exotic. However, the Indian audience, he argues, can never be a homogenous entity. It is a deeply stratifiedsociety where even the Anglophone minority is rife with political, intellectual, and other divisions. Thus the distance between writer andaudience is inevitable, regardless of the language of literary practice. The idea of an "Indian audience" is a utopian fiction based on an "Arcadianvision of Indian history".[103] If the idealistic desire for unity between writer and audience is misguided then Indian Anglophone writers, the argument goes, are no more responsible for the production of the exotic than are regional writers. Chaudhuri's line of argument, however, does not do justice to the exoticism critique.

Like Chaudhuri's article, Vikram Chandra's essay "The Cult of Authenticity" (2000) is also a defence of Indian English writing. The essay published in Boston Review is mostly a counter argument of Meenakshi Mukherjee's criticism of Indian English writing on the ground that it often caters to an elite audience and in doing so it loses its touch with the reality. Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan also make such criticism in her essay published in two parts in The Hindu in February of 2001 ("Writing in English in India, Again," and "Dealing with Anxieties", both of which was targeted by Vikkram Chandra in two essays "Arty Goodness" and "Arty Goodness II"). She notes that theories of "language-as-identity" should not be universalized, "still less [be] establish[ed] as a critical standard of 'authenticity.'"[104] Like Mukherjee, Sunder Rajan contends that Indian writers in English "sometimes do fail between explaining too much and explaining too little". She concludes: "...the question of readership, then, becomes the crucial one".She blames Rushdie's valorization of Indian-writers-in-English for "(re)cast[ing] the English 'vernaculars'linguistic/literary situation in India as an opposition between a cosmopolitan against a parochial world view".[105]

The specific accusation that both Chaudhuri and Chandra contest isthat Indian Anglophone writers tend to become orientalists to cater to their international audience. In their articles, Chaudhuri and Chandra highlight some of the central critical assumptions against Indian Anglophone literature. They foreground the critical contention that Indian English writers capitalize on their ethnic identity in ways that both pander toimmigrant nostalgia and offer images of India that are packaged for easyconsumption in the West. The exoticized cultural images, the critique claims, are, rather than a presentation of the national condition, in effect details of banal particularities devoid of history and politics.[106] On this, Indian Anglophone literature is contrasted with its vernacular counterpart, which, critics assert, largely escapes the pressures and lures of a global market. Adding to the critics' ire is the fact that the rich corpus of Indian regional literatures, even in translation, rarely captures global attention. Chaudhuri and Chandra succinctly grasp the underlying assumption of the critique: the international popularity of Indian Anglophone literature is riding high on the preferences of a global market rather than on the intrinsic literary qualities of the text.

After identifying the widespread suspicion against IndianAnglophone writers, both Chaudhuri and Chandra proceed to deny any validity to such criticism. The critics, Chandra asserts, have created a "cult of authenticity" and cry out against all perceived distortions and misrepresentations of what they believe to be the "real" India. Both writers decry what they view as the ingrained parochialism of Indian Anglophone criticism and hold that there is no material basis for its assumptions. For Chandra, the cosmopolitanism of urban India, and, for Chaudhuri, the complex conglomeration of social classes belies any homogenized notion of the nation. Their critics are thus reproached for subscribing to a utopian idea of Indian history based on a denial of its manifold social complexities.[107]

Both writers highlight in passing the possibility that the charge of exoticism is related to several factors specific to Anglophone writers: the use of an elite language, the often-deracinated social position of the writers, the catering to an audience largely untutored in Indian realities, and the lure of a lucrative Western market. But instead of engaging these issues, they ridicule them. They deny that there are any meaningful differences between the conditions of production—with regard to access to intellectual and material resources facilitated by publishers, media and the academy—of Indian Anglophone and vernacular literatures. Such differences, even when present, the writers hold, should not be read into the

literatures. With the denial that social conditions have a role in literary production, the writers come perilously close to advocating that art exists for its own sake. The critics, they contend, with their new-fangled views, are obsessed with market conditions and audience reception rather than with questions of aesthetics.[108]

According to Chandra, Indian critics are as obsessed with questions of authenticity at the expense of art as someof the most repressive regimes of the recent past. Chaudhuri shares this aversion of the political and laments that in our post-Saidian era, the analysis of a text's conditions of production has taken clear precedence over the examination of its meaning. The more interesting question is why Chaudhuri and Chandra, established Indian English writers, consider the charge to be a non-issue. Chaudhuri barely addresses the question of the class character of English and its possible implications for artistic practice. Chandra makes the novel claim that precisely because English is the lingua franca of power and privilege and the underprivileged aspire to the knowledge of English, it is not an alien and a foreign language.[109] But Chandra misses the point. The exoticism charge is not based on the idea of English as an alien language, as he suggests; instead, it focuses on the *alienating effect* that the language generates in a fiercely stratified society.

The decades of the 50s, 60s, and 70s were marked by ongoing, lively, and often acrimonious discussions by both supporters and opponents of an indigenous literature in English. And questions of artistic practice and representation remained intertwined as critics addressed multiple dimensions of these issues: the desirability of Indians choosing English as a literary medium, the practicability of doing so, the literary dilemmas of the Indian Anglophone writer, the changing character of the literature. Though Choudhury speaks of Indian criticism as a post-Saidian phenomenon it has been there since 1960s as in critics like Balachandran Rajan and P. Lal.[110]

Despite the presence of moral posturing among some Indian critics, the objections against Indian Anglophone literature have very little to do with the kind of empty moralism caricatured by Chaudhuri and Chandra. The critics are accused of adopting a very high moral ground from where they attack writers for choosing an elitist language. Similarly they are charged with erecting artificial and moralistic divisions between Indian writers in English and those writing in the vernacular. None of this, however, survives close scrutiny. It is widely acknowledged, for instance, that writers "choose" English not because it offers all the perks of

a global language but because it is usually the only language in which they have literary competence.[111] And while Anglophone literature is sometimes contrasted with its vernacular counterpart, the critics' aim is not to erect non-existent binaries but to highlight the influence of varying social conditions on cultural production.

It is not that who write in Indian languages are automatically better or worse than those who write in English. But the question of readership and whether it affects a writer at all is something that can be discussed without being judgmental. Thus, the question does not seem to focus on the more "authentically Indian" choice of a language in which to write, but rather on the results of that choice: for whom is one writing, and with what consequences (aesthetic, financial, social, etc.). In her book, The Perishable Empire, Meenakshi Mukherjee explains this in greater detail. She favorably cites Harish Trivedi's conclusion that Vikram Seth's A Suitable Boy translates into Hindi far more successfully than Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children. Anyone who has read Rushdie would immediately object that his writing, more than almost any contemporary author's, is in every sense "polyphonic," but the point that Mukherjee is making is more localized: "The rustic Urdu spoken at Debaria is made to sound different from the courtly grace of Saeeda Bai's conversation, and Haresh Khanna's studied English is evidently worlds apart from the casual doggerel-spouting wit of the Chatterjee family in Calcutta. In an unobtrusive way Seth manages to capture the linguistic diversity of Indian life even though he is writing in English".[112] The language is in one sense irrelevant, therefore; the difference between Seth and Rushdie, from Mukherjee's point of view, is in their immersion in the context of their characters. Thus, one assumes that Mukherjee is implying here that Seth, more so than Rushdie, has an eye for an audience in India—and in a particular section of India, at that.

Mukherjee insists that of the many novels written by "Third World Cosmopolitans" and now incorporated into postcolonial literature courses in the West, it seems a prerequisite that Indians on the list must write originally in English; "Implicit here," she concludes, "is an erasure of the diversity of India".[113] Graham Huggan criticizes "the tailoring of an independent India to metropolitan market tastes" because such a move risks "collapsing cultural politics into a kind of 'ethnic' spectacle, reclaiming culture as a site not of conflict but of pleasurable diversion".[114]

G. J. V. Prasad pits himself against those in the West who are the delineators of "postcolonialism":

> ...when we talk of Indian writings and post colonialism we only talk of English writings by Indians. This is the specifically, peculiarly post-colonial literature in India. It is almost as if writers in other languages in India escaped this historical experience. It is also as if Indian English writers do not have access to other Indian traditions, as if they exist in a vacuum, or a space created solely by British colonialism untouched by earlier or even contemporary lateral continuums and concerns.[115]

This latter point of Prasad is taken up by Rushdie, as well, who builds on earlier, similar arguments from Mulk Raj Anand and from Raja Rao's introduction to Kanthapura in suggesting that Indians use English in new ways, and thereby make the colonizer's language something that the formerly-colonized now own and manipulate. "One of the rules, one of the ideas on which the edifice rests," continues Rushdie,

> is that literature is an expression of nationality...Books which mix traditions, or which seek consciously to break with tradition, are often treated as highly suspect.... 'Authenticity' is the respectable child of old-fashioned exoticism. It demands that sources, forms, style, language and symbol all derive from a supposedly homogeneous and unbroken tradition.... [whereas] the rest of us understand that the very essence of Indian culture is that we possess a mixed tradition, a melange of elements as disparate as ancient Mughal and contemporary Coca-Cola American.[116]

Rushdie's argument might be heard more effectively had he not made the infamous statementthat "the true Indian literature of the first postcolonial half of the century has been made in the language the British left behind".[117]

When one involves oneself in this kind of arguments regarding the taste of metropolitan audience, and the Indian English writers' pandering to their expectations, one

must be aware that this might be a insult to the taste of Indian readers (English or otherwise). Vikram Chandra himself acknowledges the eclectic taste of Indian readers when discussing the inspiration for Red Earth and Pouring Rain's story-within-stories. Noting that commercial Indian films shaped his writing of the novel, he admits that he loves the form: "you can have...a war movie, which will stop the doomed trek of the lost platoon for a musical interlude. Now, this makes no sense to the Western eye, which is trained to read musical comedies but finds a hard-hitting war musical incomprehensible".[118] And, as Graham Huggan has noted, "it should not be forgotten that [Midnight's Children] enjoyed, as Rushdie's other novels have enjoyed, a large readership in India, nor should it be imagined that responses to his novels are culturally and/or geographically determined in any simple way".[119] As Rajeswari Sunder Rajan suggests, "a good, vibrant translation industry, supported by publishers, academic bodies and the state, is a crying need, one that would bring regional writers the visibility they deserve".[120]

VI.

What we have examined in this chapter is the politics of literary production and consumption in the field of postcolonial literature. The chapter has been an attempt at tracing the "social life of things", as theorized by Appadurai. Cultural commodities, novels in our case, come to signify and embody meanings in the intersection of their popular and critical reception as well as the machinations of the market in the globalized world. The global reach and privileged metropolitan locations of cosmopolitan writers like Rushdie, Mistry, Tharoor, Chandra, Baldwin etc point to the unavoidable fact that there is a disjuncture between the anti-colonial aesthetic of these writers and the appropriation of this very aesthetic by the global market. The market and its desire to sell these cultural products to the metropolitan readers as exotic artifacts have been examined at some length. At the same time, we have seen the linguistic dimension as well the elitist bias in some of the writers. The charge that some of these writers themselves utilize the exotic paradigm to gain benefit of the market has also been discussed. We have seen how the writers consciously work within the commercial apparatus in which they fuel the metropolitan industry of strategically exoticized products.

What becomes clear from the above discussion is that we cannot ignore the material condition of production and consumption/reception of these cultural texts. Seeing these texts as cultural products, authentic enough to speak about the postcolonial history and nation of Third World countries, the politics of reception and consumption must be taken into account. This line of argument, as exemplified by critics like Graham Huggan and others, emphasizes that on the one hand, the market and the metropolitan readers and academy appropriate and consume these texts as exotica and as authentic national documents of the Third World, and on the other hand, the writers flag exotic cultural signs for global audience.

Institutional and methodological self-criticism and oppositional positioning have always been an integrated part of postcolonial studies as an academic field. The constant self-scrutiny of the field from within its own ranks prevents the discipline fromreaching a stagnant and self-complacent level of homogeneity. While postcolonial field has become melancholic by its institutionalization and its consequent danger gaining power as *the* authoritative critical position eliminating the illusion of identifying an "authentic" margin, its self-critical enterprise has also now created unexpected worries and anxieties. The dimension of "consciousness-raising" is, according to Michael Denning, "a virtue when it means a genuinely reflective sense ofone's own being, one's own situation in the world, and one's own impact on others", thus an integral part of the "emergence of any social movement of subaltern peoples".[121] It is true that the danger of institutionalization, which haunts the contemporary field of postcolonial studies in theage of global commodification, would seem to demand even more pronounced calls for a self-critical approach; but at the same time it may equally be relevant to see this demand *in itself* as something that has become a fetishized, empty, and self-congratulating gesture. Relentless self-flagellation or a theoretical short-circuit or impasse, playing a vital part in the processof contemporary melancholia. In other words, while the dimension of self-criticism or self-reflexivity seems to constitute a necessary disciplinary maneuver in postcolonial studies, it may simultaneously be conceived as a symptom of a certain methodological narcissism, which legitimizes institutionally an increasingly prescriptive framework that dogmatically maintains its position as *the critical position* in academia.

But despite such widespread politics of production, consumption and reception, we must not be overwhelmed by a melancholic sense of resignation that the postcolonial writers

are *necessarily* and *always* helpless and passive victims who fall easy preys to the metropolitan marketing monster. In other words, we need to have a balanced view and look at the exceptions and other factors which might get lost in the noise of wholesale condemnation and rejection. In contrast to the critics who see the market as omnipotent in the shaping and valuing of postcolonial literature, there are other critics who claim that the situation is not exclusively so. Among this group of critics, we would examine the views of Sarah Brouillette, Bishnupriya Ghosh, and Deepika Bahri.

Notwithstanding the pressures and tactical marketing strategies, it would be wrong to say that postcolonial writers are *necessarily* dupes of the global industry. In an earlier part of this chapter, we discussed how postcolonial writers like Rushdie, Mistry and Chandra participate in a "strategic exoticism" or "staged marginality"[122] to cater to the market demand and the taste for exotic and 'authentic' documents of the Third World But at the same time, we must not forget that the same authors respond to the market's dictates in critical and ironic ways. One of the ways in which these authors evade the exoticizing tendency of the market and subvert the anticipation of the market reader is by writing novels that display a keen understanding of an author's function. Sarah Brouillette points out such authorial function via her strong critique of Graham Huggan'scynical and, at times, simplistic description of a cosmopolitan consumer with a touristic desire for exotic products. Brouillette argues that in critiquing "an unnamed cosmopolitan consumer who seeks mythic access to exotic experience", Huggan implicitly posits "a group of educated, elite, distinguished consumers who actually have access to the reality that the *other* consumer can only ever wish to possess".[123] In place of such a contest between bad, touristic readers and good readers with access to insider knowledge, Brouillette finds it "more fruitful to understand strategic exoticism, and likewise general postcolonial authorial self-consciousness, as comprised of a set of literary strategies that operate through assumptions shared between the author and the reader, as both producer and consumer work to negotiate with, if not absolve themselves of, postcoloniality's touristic guilt".[124]

We have also discussed the penchant of global institutions for rewarding postcolonial fictions—that the prizing cultures like that of the Booker replicates older historical forms of cultural imperialism. But we must remember that it is not just the Booker winning postcolonial texts but there are numerous other texts which are equally guilty of complicity.

We must remember that literary awards do not or should not change the dynamics of reading. This issue of "complicity" of the writers with the market demands is one of those self-reflexive gestures in the postcolonial studies which decry the emptying out of "resistance" postcolonial texts as multicultural staples. One way of coming out of this melancholia of too much self-reflexiveness of the postcolonial field is to return to a consideration of the aesthetics dimension in the postcolonial texts in an attempt to unearth the social function of artworks.

Marxist aesthetic theories of Theodore Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Herbert Marcuse demonstrate how the aesthetic dimension can be a crucial category in assessing such social function. A close and serious engagement with this aesthetic paradigm in postcolonial texts like Midnight's Children, The Great Indian Novel, Such a Long Journey or Rich Like Us can help us recognize that some of the canonical postcolonial texts, despite their authorized circulation in global markets, are replete with utopian political dimensions. Deepika Bahri who makes such an appeal for Marxist aesthetic consideration argues in her book Native Intelligence: Aesthetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature (2003) that the work of criticismcan elucidate the "unknowable" utopias of postcolonial texts by attending to a "native intelligence" that is not informancy.[125] In other words, critics need to work at dislodging the flow of postcolonial literature as commodity by preventing the quick translation of literature into information. A reading of the literary text's aesthetic capacities might lead us somewhere else: to consider how the text calls into question the means by which the end of political struggle is achieved, how it asks us to ponder the relation between theory and practice and how it gestures toward an unknowable utopia. In her chapter on Rushdie where Bahri proceeds through readings of Grimus, Shame, and Midnight's Children to alight on Moor's Last Sigh as the culmination of a certain Rushdiean aesthetics, Bahri elaborates on Rushdie's Benjaminian habit—his "improper subscription to modern units of time and space" (a requisite for signing the modern nation) in representing a "disaggregated and plural" nation.[126]

In Bahri's theorization, the concept of "Native intelligence" is a "mode of perception relevant in its own context," stirrings in indigenous and vernacular contexts that shore up the limits of metropolitan knowledge authorized by disciplinary postcoloniality.[127] In Rushdie's case, this limit of metropolitan knowledge is exposed by his concept of time and space which disrupt the concepts of Western modernity. This search for alternative modernity can be seen

in Sealy's appropriation of the "nama" form as a valid form of writing history; in Chandra's flouting of Cartesian and Aristotelian rules; in Tharoor's epic, digressive historiography; and in Kesavan's counterfactual mode of history. All these writers, from Rushdie to Sealy and Mistry, from Tharoor and Ghosh to Baldwin and Deb are questioning modernity in their representation of "disaggregated and plural" nation. The easy consumption by the metropolitan readers can be countered by a dedicated aesthetic criticism which would situate these texts in their historical context. This thesis, in its own small ways, has made such an attempt to align epistemological histories with the literary texts, examining the similarities between the Subaltern School of history and the novels that emerged in the 1980s.

Self-scrutiny is important, particularly at this historical moment, when postcolonialism's success internationally, and academically, risks becoming its own liability. Though the major part of this research has underlined the oppositional and subversive potential of the novels at recuperating lost, suppressed histories, we cannot avoid examining the politics of production and reception. It is necessary to recognize the blind-spots to remain truly committed to an oppositional postcolonial politics. Such self-scrutiny not only helps us to confront our internalized uncertainties, but also provides a window to see how postcolonial writers and theorists are at once empowered and constrained by the very success of the discourse they embrace.

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Conclusion

I must say first of all that description is itself a political act... So it is clear that re describing a world is the necessary first step towards changing it...altering the past to fit its present needs, then the making of the alternative realities of art, including the novel of memory, becomes politicized.

—Salman Rushdie, Imaginary Homelands.

In a review of Githa Hariharan's novel In Times of Siege (2003), Alok Rai wrote that "History is plastic".[1] He also invoked George Orwell's famous dictum from 1984: He who controls the past controls the future. Hariharan's novel deals with some of the most important issues of Indian public life: the control of history by those in power, the abuse of history in the interest of politics and religion, and most importantly the re-writing of history.

In Times of Siege explores the battle over history in modern India, the distortion of history by political parties, and the 'Hinduisation' of education. In the novel, Shiv Murthy is a professor at an Open University in Delhi who is in charge of preparing a course-module on Medieval Indian History. Problem arises when a group of fundamentalist accuses Professor Murthy of making insulting statements about Basava, the 12th century founder of the Virsaiva movement and the first of its great poets. The Hindu fundamental organization demands the withdrawal of the module and an apology from Murthy. His refusal to bow down to the communal forces result in mobs and mayhem, media frenzy, and violence that ultimately threatens the very existence of Professor Murthy and his family. Echoes of the Mandir-Masjid debate reverberate, the demolition of the Babri Masjid becoming a metaphor for the collapse of values that could have held a nation together.

An important concern of the novel is the re-writing of history. History is characterized by a kind of plasticity that can be moulded by anybody. This malleability of history gives any version of particular event validity and it can claim to be the real truth. The university authorities, well aware of the power of the mob, would ultimately bow down before the rabble and concede to its irrational demands. The novel, in a way, charts the troubled reality of

contemporary India where history text-books have been re-written by people in power to suit religious and narrow essentialist agendas. In recent decades, there have been numerous instances when history has been moulded and distorted by political parties to give their version of "truth". To carry out religiously-motivated ideologies, devices have been envisaged to change the Constitution. Dalits, tribals, backward castes and other marginalized and suppressed communities are in search of a nation inspired by egalitarian values, social justice, economic opportunities and participation in political decision-making. The Right-wings, mostly Hindutva ideologues, are equally strong in trying to insist on a model of the nation based on ancient Hindu cultural values.

The novel also draws our attention to censorship and the freedom of speech. It mentions other instances when the voice of the intellectual has been ruthlessly silenced by fundamentalism—Salman Rushdie's, for instance, or Taslima Nasrin's. The last of Deepa Mehta's trilogy, Water, the filming of which was abandoned on similar grounds, can also be mentioned. The most recent case was the withdrawal of Rohinton Mistry's novel Such a Long Journey from the University of Mumbai English honours course when last year the Shiv Sena accused that Mistry wrote some offensive things about Shiv Sena and its leader Bal Thakeray. Incidents like these put serious doubt about the place of intellectual freedom in contemporary India.

Despite the fact that "ahistoricism is one of the defining features" and "greatest attractions" of Indian civilization, history as a discipline has increasingly assumed a major role in India as the past has become an object of debate in the post-independence period. This is particularly true of the last twenty years or so, when the rise of a Hindu right has led to speculations about the future of secularism in the country. There has been an intense interface between professional historians and the wider public. While examining this remarkable phenomenon of "history in the ascendant mode" in contemporary India, Vinay Lal writes:

> Almost nothing must appear more remarkable to a student of the social sciences, or of the wider intellectual scene, in India than the recent ascendancy of 'history' and the elevation of historians to a position of public recognition if not eminence. Outside the hard sciences, as well as those disciplines, such as economics, which have self-consciously fashioned themselves after the

sciences and mathematics, and in all of which Indian achievements have acquired something of an international dimension, no discipline has gained as much visibility as has history in the course of the previous two to three decades.[2]

Most of these debates that have animated public life of India are related to questions of identity, religion, nationalism, and the idea of India, or what India is or should be. While militant Hindu revivalism trying to define India in terms of an essentialized Hindu identity, on the other hand, voices from below— tribals, Dalits, religious, ethnic and linguistic groups are clamouring for recognition and acceptance in the Indian national commonwealth. Due to such contrary and often violent claims, the nation of India has become a site of constant conflicts and fissures. The discipline of history has been the preferred arena on which these debates have been played out. It is always history which have been used and abused by various political parties and institutions to justify their respective claims or to refute the claims of others.

One of the biggest signposts of how historical thinking has forged its way into the public consciousness is regarding the dispute over the Babri Masjid. When in the late 1980s, the dispute over the origins of the sixteenth-century mosque began to engulf the nation, and culminated in its destruction on 6th December 1992 and the eventual bloody communal riots across India, historians were suddenly thrust into the limelight. Academic historians were summoned into service to verify or repudiate the claims and counter-claims. The striking thing was that the dispute was shifted onto the terrain of historical discourse, with both the "secularists" and their purported opposites, the "fundamentalists" choosing to take recourse to notions of historical "truth" and "evidence" to stake their positions.

Another marker of this dominance of history and historians in Indian public life has been the issues of the re-writing of history text-books. Aurangzeb becomes, in these politically and ideologically tilted histories, the typical Muslim villain who razed temples and Shivaji becomes the earliest nationalist who fought for cultural and nationalist self-assertion. The controversial issue of history text-books being given communal and Hindutva touch flared up during the rule of the BJP-led government in the late 1990s. But intimations of the controversy can be traced to the time of the first non-Congress government in 1977-80

following Indira Gandhi's defeat at the polls in 1977. At that time certain history text-books, used widely in schools around the country, were proposed to be withdrawn from circulation on the grounds that their authors—among them Romila Thapar, R. S. Sharma, and Bipan Chandra—were insufficiently critical of the "dark period" of Indian history under Muslim rule and the despotism of Aurangzeb, and similarly not appreciative enough of the stellar contributions towards Indian independence of such nationalist stalwarts as Tilak and Aurobindo Ghosh.

The situation has changed but little in the intervening years. The publication of Towards Freedom, a two-volume history on the freedom movement by the respected as a result of pressure from right-wing Hindu fundamentalists who objected to the two authors' criticism of the role played by Hindu communalist organizations in the freedom movement and the highlighting of the movement's secular nature. From the 1990s onwards, history and historians have become more prominent in the public life of the country as the tendency of re-writing of text-books and fabrication of history have taken more sinister turns.

What becomes apparent from the above discussion is that the process of history writing in contemporary India has attained a great deal of complexity, and the whole enterprise of historical recreations in the country has been riddled with several kinds of biases and risky political interests. This difficult and complicated situation reached its nadir when the historians of the country openly clashed with each other in 1991. The main groups in the clash were identified as Marxist and communalist historians; both charged each other with paying undue attention to certain specific periods of India's past, to legitimatize their own views and positions, and paying little attention to the damage they were causing to the body politic. Hardly a few days before this, the minister of Human Resource Development in the government complicated the situation by announcing in the parliament that a committee had been formed to initiate a project on writing a post-1947 history of the country. It consisted of several distinguished academics who aroused considerable controversy in the press because of their pronounced leftist leanings. Although the minister assured the members of the house that the committee would be completely autonomous akin to the Royal Commission set up in Britain, several members expressed their apprehensions about the domineering role of the government in shaping public opinion and thinking to suit its own interests. The chairman of the committee, S Gopal as well as some members came out in defense of the government in

the national press. But some members of the committee expressed surprise over their inclusion and came out strongly against the idea, and dissociated themselves from it. They said that they were opposed to all kinds of state-sponsored history, no matter how meaningful and well-intentioned it might be.

Dharma Kumar, who dissociated himself from the committee, draws attention to its two major defects. First, that Indian history would be used as a political resource and not necessarily for promoting social amity through an objective history of the nation where all people would be given due representation and historical agency as intended by the government: "Politicians whip up public passions by dwelling on past injustices, real or imaginary...Now that 'historical injustice' establishes a claim to state benefits, the demand for the manufacture of usable history is increasing".[3] The second defect is the illusive thinking on the part of the historians that they could counter politics involved in history-writing through government agencies: "the thought that the 'objective and impartial history' of modern India can be determined by a few academics and ultimately by MPs is frightening, besides being comic".[4]

Instances and accusations of use, misuse and abuse of history by the government have increased considerably during the past several years. The central government led by different political parties have been time and again held guilty of using history for establishing its power base. The most controversial and by far the most damaging of such instance was during the tenure of BJP led government when historiography was again used as a political weapon when it tried to give Indian history an overtly Hindu colour.

The dismissed BJP governments of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh were charged with rewriting, during their rule, history books for school-going children with an overwhelming Hindu bias in them. How much it damaged the body politic of the nation can be witnessed in the controversy regarding the Ran Janmabhumi/Babari Masjid case and the consequent communal horror that followed. Rewriting of history that is based on communal, religious and political motives often spawns ugly identity politics and violent ethnic and communal tensions. It is in this context that the texts under the present study become relevant in this discussion. Writers like Rushdie, Tharoor, Mistry, Sealy, and Kesavan are acutely aware of the ways in which history has often been abused and manipulated by the state machineries for political gains. Most of these writers are themselves victims of this political

game. These writers not only expose the ways in which history has been put to abuse, but also try to write alternative versions of history that contest and confront both colonial and neo/post-colonial historiography with a view to historical reparation, recuperation, and historical excavation.

Speaking about the significance of the role and prominence of historians in the Babri Masjid episode, Vinay Lal wrote:

> The public might have been forgiven for thinking that right belonged to the party which produced the more plausible historical account, and that it was enough to produce compelling 'historical' evidence to settle the vexed questions surrounding the histories of conquest, the politics of memory, the notions of 'historical wrongs' and 'retribution', the communalization of history, the anxieties generated by masculinity, and the emergence of nation-states in the Indian sub-continent which underlay the dispute over the Babri Masjid.[5]

Since history is regarded as the repository of identity and national-character, historians and history have assumed a prominent position in Indian public life. While Indian historiography has tried to make its way through this maze of political, ideological and cultural dilemmas and conflicts, Indian Writing in English have also supplemented in working out alternative models of history and historical thinking as we have discussed in the previous chapters. In spite of the many pitfalls and dangerous developments, there have been strands of history writing which have tried resolutely to resist the abuse of history at the hands of power. While, historians like Dipesh Chakravorty, Sumit Sarkar, Irfan Habib, Partha Chatterjee, Gautam Bhadra, Gyan Prakash, Ashish Nandy etc have advocated and practised alternative ways of doing history—history of the "third kind", "mythographies"—writers like Rushdie, Tharoor, Sealy, Mistry etc. have supplemented the historical enterprise. The imaginative writings by these authors may not be taken as historical documents, but they help us to think about the diverse ways that history of India can be explored. By displacing the idea of "historical objectivity" they dismantle the claims of ideological discourses that seek to hegemonize historical truth and

historical evidence as immutable facts, which go on to essentialize Indian history and cultural identity.

Today the pluralistic characteristics of Indian society are being threatened by various forces. It is during such a scenario of growing fundamentalism, chauvinism and exclusionary policies of the ruling elites that the intellectuals and writers in India have a committed role to play., and there is a great and urgent need In an essay "In Search of Our Selves", Githa Hariharan says that we, the citizens of India, live in a "time of siege" and then goes on to underscore the role of writers in public life when the cultural and democratic space is shrinking and censorship is stifling all kinds of dissent:

> Obviously, in times of siege the writer is more, not less, important...The overall object of resistance—in the Indian context, but this can be extended to other contexts—is resisting the marking ofthis heterogeneity as a disputed structure, allowing it to grow weak, turn divisive when attacked by the various homogenizing religious and cultural nationalisms.[6]

There is an urgent need to understand the historical processes of the past and the socio-political maladies of the present. There must be greater engagement and interactions among the various forces and institutions and historical schools. Such interactions and dialogues should involve wide participation of public, intellectuals, and institutions and engage with socio-political questions of our present times. While the historical enterprise on the academic front are engaged in such a dialogue, literature is also contributing to this exploration of the past and understanding of the present, while at the same time drawing attention to the blind-spots of academic, official historical enterprise.

This thesis, in a way, can be seen as an extended exploration of the ways in which Indian English writers have sought to resist exclusion, oppression, bigotry, and erasure through strategies such as irony and irreverence, the humanization of perpetrators of crime, and by refusing always to place readers into comfortable superior positions of anger and indignation. Imaginative writing, novel being one, provides a space for the enunciation of the multi-vocality of the nation thereby resisting or undermining those forces that forbid the healthy growth and proliferation of true democratic ethos. Indian English writings of the last

two or three decades have shown the commitment of engaging sincerely and powerfully with the issues and debates most crucial to Indian public life.

History remains a contested site in India as everybody tries to mould it according to his or her agendas. Contemporary writers are well-aware of the plasticity of history. The novels and their subversive histories as opposed to the monologic official history are important interventions in working out alternative ways of historicizing our times as well as the past in meaningful, open-ended narratives which align themselves to the ecological plurality of Indian life. These novels may not be authentic histories, nor do they claim such status. They have their own fallibilities; they are marked by various ellipses and ideological-conceptual-linguistic paradoxes. But they remain important in maintaining the balance in understanding our times in wider perspectives, and also because they warn us to the dangers when the historical enterprise becomes a plaything at the hands of those in power.

Intimately connected to the historical enterprise and debates are crucial questions about whose memories will prevail, which accounts are the most accurate, and how particular meanings are conveyed (and others ignored) by specific kinds of representation. Making matters worse, clear protocols about adequate or appropriate forms for narrating particular pasts are not shared by all, nor are there commonly held notions of responsibility for historical truth-telling among the various producers of history. In this postmodern age, the fact that there are multiple ways of producing the past and all these ways have their effects on historical consciousness of a nation and its people, is widely accepted. Imaginative writing, novels in particular, is one way of doing history, as we have discussed in the preceding chapters. Novels, stories, dramas, films and other media have always dealt with history, and the demand for historical narratives in popular mediums has increased in recent times.

This should enable us to look at historical events through somewhat wider lens so that we are able to think simultaneously about different kinds of histories and their meanings in the present.As Vivian Sobchack argues, the exchanges of an electronic discussion group called H-Film [history film] demonstrate that "our encounters with a variety of historicized images and narratives from a variety of textual [and non-textual] sources both layer themselves and sit beside each other as the historical field-and none of them can be completely erased".[7] In this broader sense, making history becomes, then, less the autonomous preserve of any one constituency or guild, and the historical narrative less a

finished story, than a dynamic project that encompasses both the production and reception of intersecting, overlapping, contradictory, and parallel accounts of the past. This observation is crucial in doing or thinking about history in general in India, and in understanding the narrativization of history by the writers in this study.

These novels make serious intervention into the discourse of history, seeking to dismantle the claims of authority by those in power. At the same time they offer their own versions of history which are equally valid "parallel accounts of the past". It is not surprising that many characters in the novels under the present study are historians or chroniclers, or at least, inspired by historical methodology. Saleem Sinai in Rushdie's Midnight's Children is a historian who tries to write his own life as well as that of the nation. He is well aware of the problems of historiography, and in the role of a historian or chronicler of his life and that of the nation, Saleem makes incisive comments on the fallibility of teleology and objectivity in historiography and emphasizes the role of memory in creating a personal version. In Sealy's novel The Trotter Nama, Eugene is a chronicler who was set forth on his mission of excavating the history of his illustrious family by the ghost of the founder of the Trotter clan Justin Trotter. There is another historian figure in the novel: the colonial Theobald Horatius Montagu who exemplifies the historian who is motivated by political partisanship and whose supposedly definitive history is full of gaps and silences. Eugene calls Montagu the devil and "Anti-Trotter" and goes out to set the record straight by resorting to a more colourful and inclusive method of historical investigation. The unnamed narrator in Amitav Ghosh's novel The Shadow Lines is a student of history engaged in research. In fact, almost all of Ghosh's works have such researcher figures. Mukul Kesavan's novel Looking Through Glass has a narrator who is much beholden to historical methodologies and well-aware of the complexities involved in the writing and doing history. In real life also both Ghosh and Kesavan are related to similar disciplines—Ghosh was trained as an anthropologist in India and at Oxford, and Kesavan is a historian at Jamia Milia Islamia. Towards the end of Sahgal's Rich Like Us, we see Sonali engaged in research on Indian history. She takes up the study of the decorative artsof the seventeenth century, one of the greatest and richest periods of Indian history. This historical investigation helps her overcome the nightmarish experience of the Emergency and redeems her faith in the resilient spirit of India. She comes to realize that one should not be pessimistic about India because India is rich in spirit and history and

heritage. O. P. Mathur says that this historical research on the part of Sonali suggests that"the past of India is not all cruel and barbarous but that there is much in it that appeals to sensitive souls. Such riches and such heroic individuals and events subsume and overwhelm such nauseating episodes as the 'Sati'and the Emergency".[8]

In fact, historical research and investigation in the texts are shown to be acts of redemption—from both personal and public trauma. The characters are depicted as involved in historical investigation, reconstruction or research, through which they hope to salvage some meaning and pattern from the chaos of lies, illusions, silences, horror and tragedy. Saleem Sinai in Midnight's Children, the unnamed narrator in The Shadow Lines, Eugene in The Trotter-Nama—they are desperately looking for answers and meaning which they do not hope to find in histories written or narrated by others. The narrator in The Shadow Lines finds the answer to the mystery that he has been chasing for long fifteen years—and when he finds it—all the puzzles fit into places and the truth sets him free.

This thesis elaborately explored the engagement of history in selected Indian English novels. Indian English writers have been able to assimilate the social scenario of modern India in the throes of change and the complex dilemmas confronting it in its efforts to find solutions to the problems bedevilling it. Indian fiction in English has always held a mirror up to Indian social life. The gruesome poverty, the struggle for Independence, the trauma of the Partition, social changes, crisis of identity, emerging experiences of alienation and anarchy—all these have figured on the screen of the Indian novel in English.

The intense and insistent engagement with history reflects "the radical wishes to alter being, to change, to reshape, destroy it, to leave it different from what it is".[9] In the novels of Rushdie, Ghosh, Sahgal, Tharoor, Sealy, Chandra, Mistry, Baldwin, Kesavan and Deband many other contemporary writers, multiple readings of history and current politics are provided to destabilize the official version. All these novels question the dominant record of western history and are characterized with a critical attitude to nationalist history and representation of the nation. They highlight the selectivity, omissions and emphasis involved in all historicization and narrativization. By exposing the fictionality of history and underscoring the importance and role of narrativity of history, and by blurring the distinction between history and fiction, these novels resist the hegemonic drive at all kinds of totalization and fixity of meaning and identity. The writers in their works give the picture of "an India of

multiple realities and of multiple interpretations of reality" and the Indian sensibility emerges as a cosmopolitan one shaped by "a variety of sources and influences, indigenous and international".[10]

The novels that emerged during the 1980 and the ones that followed have vehemently contested many conventional ideas and attitudes regarding official versions of history, patriarchal versions of womanhood, and institutionalized versions of the subaltern. They destabilize given versions, undermine their ideological underpinnings, and subvert them with the installation of newer versions to correct the relations of power in contemporary Indian society. These writers espouse the impinging experience of multicultural heterogeneity of India while at the same time revealing the conflicts and crisis that beset national life. These novels are marked by a sense of multiplicity, fragmentation, instability of meaning, dissension, breakdown of assumptions and heterogeneity rather than consensus and totality.

The novels under the study concern themselves with almost all the important historical events of the history of the nation of the last couple of centuries. Post-colonial literature, such as these, addresses the question of national identity after the Empire, and these novels chart the coming into being of the nation and its subsequent historical and socio-political development after decolonization. As such, these novels can help us understand the profoundly complex political, racial and cultural transaction between the colonizer and colonized, the several distinct phases of nationalism that the nation has gone through, from imitation and assimilation to resistance and finally to post-colonial internationalization.

The new novels in English encompass both aesthetic considerations and social concerns, thereby performing the twin objectives of literature—delight and instruction. Rushdie himself claims in one of his interviews that a good novelist is not who teaches but leaves the judgement in the hands of readers or critics. Rushdie allows the readers to assert their own choice between faith and doubt. Literature has its roots in history, both past and present. The literary text comes out of literary environment, which in turns is inspired and shaped by the historical environment. Rushdie says "we remake the past to suit our present purposes, using memory as our tool".[11] In other words, we remember and write in order to know and have some control over the production of our present. Writers of historiographic metafiction like Rushdie and Tharoor sometimes seem to take sportive flight from history, a reversal and resistance to history, a liberated zone in which the exigencies of the "real" seem

to evaporate. But nonetheless, the "real" of the national and historical sites are what concerns them. Despite, the literary polishing and embellishment of the fantastic, fabulative, imaginative, the core is the "real" itself and these novels always present what is historically real. All the novels under the present study offer different and often competing versions of reality. An artist's version of reality may differ from a politician's, but this does not make it any less valid. Politically conscious fiction is made up of "books that draw new and better maps of reality."[12] Through an inclusive consciousness of history, these writers not only intervene into the discourse of history but also write the nation in all its riddles and miracles.

The "maps of reality" that these novels chart is that of India as a postcolonial nation-state and its potted and, for the most part, traumatic journey from colonial slavery to sovereign, liberal democracy. Reading these texts and their representation of this history make it clear that this map is full of riddles, conflicts and violence. They not only reveal the betrayal of the promise of anti-colonial nationalism but also bear witness to the ongoing and relentless tide of violent struggles, conflicts and oppression. The writers, through their historical consciousness, reveal that contemporary India is a "zone of instability" where different communities and ethnicities continue to fight and struggle against various forces and structures of power. These novels represent social sufferings and historical dilemmas and problems—many of which are inherited and many are created by the postcolonial ruling elites.

At the same time, Indian society remains "deeply hierarchical and unequal" and the problem of establishing "effective" democracy in a nation beset with crisis, both internal and external, haunts the national fabric.[13] All the novels studied here and many others, both older and the new ones, speak about these problems that stunt the growth of democratic ethos in the country. Liberal democracy in all its utopian glory remains just that—a utopia, and therefore history, in the sense of Fukuyama (a la Hegel and Kojeve) remains very much alive and real for Indians.

Writing in the immediate aftermath of the enthusiastic glorification of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Francis Fukuyama announced the "End of History", by which he meant that, with the collapse of communism, the democratic capitalist order has come to stay. According to Fukuyama, it is the most natural and best form of governance and one that exists as "the end of history".[14] Obviously, Fukuyama's theory draws from the ideas of Hegel for

whom "the end of history" was something like the Prussian state in which he ended his career. Again, for Marx, the "end of history" could mean the advent of communism and the "dictatorship of the proletariat". For Fukuyama, it is the end of a certain ideological order and the solidification of another ideal—liberal democracy. He envisions the triumph of liberal democracy (which he does not hesitate to identify with capitalist democracy) as the end of History. Once it is achieved, "there would be no further progress in the development of underlying principles and institutions, because all the really big questions had been settled".[15] He proclaims free market economy as the most natural form of economic organization. But the truth, as it has emerged, in the aftermath of 9/11, the never-ending conflicts in Afganistan, Iraq, Sudan, the dissents in Yemen, Egypt, former Yugoslavia, and in many Asian countries, history has a long way to go before liberal democracy triumphs over chaos.

In India, we have already seen the many failures and betrayals by this form of government. This thesis, in a way, charted this failure and the conflicts, crisis, fissures inherent in our democratic set-up. Fukuyama relies heavily on Hegelian dialectics and it has serious consequences for historical thinking in the context of India. Already Hegel is a much hated figure in the novels by Rushdie, Tharoor and Sealy. Fukuyama's thesis subscribes to Hegel's philosophy of Universal History where mankind moves inevitably to one final destination through its historical lineal progress. But contesting such prophetic teleology, Roger Kimball writes:

> Is it not rather that what one needs in order to discern progress is knowledge of where mankind has been, not where it is going? And in any case, whom should we trust to furnish us with accurate reports about where mankind is going? Is G. W. F. Hegel, for all his genius, really a reliable guide? Is Fukuyama? No: history, a humble account of how man has lived and suffered, is what we require to declare progress, not prophecy.[16]

Imaginative writing, and novels in particular have accounted for this human side of history—the sufferings, pain, chaos, displacement, loss—that prophetic history or celebratory accounts of democracy and the new world order have ignored. Perhaps the most obvious problem with Hegel's philosophy of history is that the necessary freedom which his system mandates can

look a lot like unfreedom to others who disagree with its dictates. Sometimes "real freedom" that Hegel speaks of demands the subjugation of mere contingent will.

Growing tides of globalization has further given strength to the proposition of the death of history. Theories of globalization have increasingly emphasized the erasure of cultural differences under globalization. The much discussed book Empire by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) well illustrates globalization theory's manoeuvre of a paradigm shift in cultural critique away from the question of history.[17] But to speak of such a demise or downplaying of the relevance of history is nothing but a premature and potentially dangerous gesture. On the contrary, it is just because of globalization's onslaught that the question of history becomes all the more urgent for postcolonial societies. Postcolonial studies cannot afford to do without a consideration of history as the defining characteristic of postcolonial studies is nothing less than the engagement with colonial pasts and the historical processes by which postcolonial societies have come into being.

Philosophers, historians and ideologues like Hegel, Fukuyama and Kojeve are all exponents of a strain of triumphalism within Western culture that is ideologically highly suspect. This strain becomes defunct in the presence of the kind of historical narratives of the nation that the writers under this study offer. Derrida was vehemently opposed to this kind of triumphalism in the ideology of the end of history which also implies intolerance towards ways of life other than one's own. Dissent is one way of countering such hegemonic moves and imaginative writing is definitely a powerful site of such dissent. Derrida, in Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International (1994), speaks of benign spirits and frightening specters of the past who are always with us, and that those dead will continue to haunt us and to defer the possibility of any end to history; as he says: "the dead can often be more powerful than the living".[18] We cannot escape from history because we are products of as well as heir to the past. As such a society simply extends history as it goes along. Derrida's spirit of Marx, with its appeal to plural socio-political contituencies is designed to counter such triumphalism, with all the drawbacks that accompany it.

Zygmunt Bauman, bemoaning the lack of ideological alternative to Western capitalist democracy post-Cold War, warned of the dangerously rampant and unchecked nature of liberal democracy, with its almost unlimited power and authority to exploit and control lives

of defenceless individuals—a scenario that is fast emerging in India.[19] Seen from such perspectives, and keeping in mind the need for dissent and plurality of life, "one can, indeed one *should*, be late to the end of history, since that demonstrates resistance to an authoritarianism that is all too typically a stock-in-trade of ideology in general" (italics in original).[20] An oppositional ideology is necessary to keep the state of affairs in balance. Postcolonial writers and intellectuals, despite the many fissures and failures, are engaged in working out such an oppositional discourse.

History and the nation remain, for Indian English writers, the prime focus, as Indian democracy goes through crisis of cessation, fundamentalism, terrorism, corruption, as well as showing occasional signs of real progress. In this sense, the journey of liberal democracy in India continues and so, with it, "history" goes on, too. Consequently, writers go on producing narratives of history of this journey of the nation.

Many of the most significant works that have emerged in recent years pick up and rework the themes of the novels discussed in this study, albeit in fresh ways and in different contexts. History and historical consciousness remains the central concern of Indian English writers. Both older writers and a new crop of writers continue to explore historical issues in fiction. Among the older writers, Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide, and The Sea of Poppies, Rushdie's Shalimar the Clown and the recent The Enchantress of Florence, Upamanyu Chatterjee's The Mammaries of the Welfare State and Weight-loss, Amit Choudhury's A New World etc are all about history. As in the novels under the study, we see the more recent writers writing about family andcommunity. One of the best novels that incorporate family story and larger historical perspectives is Rohinton Mistry's Family Matters published in 2002. In 2004 an even older writer, Kushwant Singh wrote a novel Burial at Sea, returning once again to the territories he knows best: twentieth century Indian history, bogus religion and sexuality.

The nation remains an integral concern of the writers. The younger and recent writers, though not rejecting the national altogether, seem to be moving away from pan-Indian nation-centric engagement to a more diffused and wide-ranging approach to engaging with history. This concern with local allegiance and people seems to be increasingly the dominant tendency of recent Indian English novels in their representation of history and the nation. Many recent

novels have focussed on communal and sectarian religious tensions. Hindu majoritarianism, Islamism, and movements of secession, all of which put pressure on the idea of a unitary postcolonial nation-state, also emerge as prominent concerns.

Some of the recent novels, especially those written after the terror attack in New York in September 2001, attempt to make sense of the menace of terrorism and the growing concern regarding America's war on Terror and its fallout around the world. Rushdie's novel Fury (2001), though coming out before 9/11 is about the atmosphere of fear, menace and anger in New York and the religious revival and Islamism in America. Rushdie has always been concerned with fundamentalism and religious bigotry and in his later novels like The Moor's Last Sigh and The Ground Beneath Her Feet he exposes Hindu religious nationalism which has threatened the secular, cosmopolitan essence of India. The Moor's Last Sigh provides an elegy to Rushdie's ideal of hybridity as a consequence of his realisation that such a concept was no longer applicable in an India dominated by Hindu nationalism and the homogenising forces of a global capitalist economy.Midnight's Children still pleads for a fulfilment of the promises of equality and justice made by the Nehruvian nation-state. In The Moor's Last Sigh, in contrast, the Nehruvian consensus is depicted as crumbling and Hindu nationalism is portrayed as the new dominant force in the late twentieth century, a force which imagines India as an exclusive Hindu nation.

Fundamentalism and its contamination of civil society and democratic ethos of the country as a theme has always been a concern—from Midnight's Children, Satanic Verses and The Shadow Lines to The Great Indian Novel and Such a long Journey and A Fine Balance. These historical novels are intimately caught up in the debate around secular and religious identities in the public sphere that gained increasing momentum in India of the 1980s and 1990s. In India, the rise of the Hindu right has resulted in a sidelining of secular nationalism, based on the idea of a composite national culture, in favour of Hinduized versions of it.But in recent times, especially after the Ayoddhya and Godhra incident, and the several riots in Gujrat and other parts of India, the theme has taken the centre-stage. We have seen one aspect of this theme in Hariharan's novel In Times of Siege. Tharoor's later novel Riot is exclusively about religious funamentalism and its senseless violence. Raj Kamal Jha's The Blue Bedspread is a moving tale of loss of innocence in time of religious violence. Shama Futehally's Reaching Bombay Central (2002) and Githa Hariharan's In Times of Siege deal

with similar themes but they do so from from different perspectives. In each book the crucible from which the characters are cast has been forged out of communalist pressures on individual civil servants. In In Times of Siege the pressures come from fundamentalist fervor, whereas in Reacing Bombay Central, it's simple political expediency that menaces the characters. Futehally's novel portrays the anguish of a Muslim couple, the toll it takes on their marriage and family life, the simple awkwardness of being Muslim in India today.

Another significant development to this diffused approach towards history and nation is the growing urge of Indian English writers to tackle the issues of globalization and ramifications of economic liberalization. Indian English writing is now strongly embedded in the global frame, and it is now engaged in asking questions like "what shape does 'India' take fifty or more years after the independent nation-state officially came into existence on the world stage? How are older narratives of nation being rewritten or replaced by new ones that seek to break, remould or interrogate the former in the face of migration and globalization? Who owns 'the past' and what is the writer's responsibility in relation to it?"[21]

Arundhati Roy's God of Small Things published in 1997 was, it seems in retrospect, to be one of those novels that heralded a new kind of engagement with the question of history than the Rushdie-inspired earlier novels. If Rushdie's Midnight's Children and the novels following in its wake were marked with the big questions of the nation and history on epic scales, God of Small Things concentrates on "small voice of history".[22] It makes use of personal memories of childhood, which is both idyllic and tragic, and through this Roy displaces the fixation on the nation-state. History is very much a presence in Roy's novel. But unlike the novels discussed in this study, God of Small Things uses History as an abstract idea rather than events. Of course, this abstract notion of history tends to make the novel ahistorical at times. But the point is that the novel eschews large narratives and seeks to articulate the inner, tragic world of people which cannot be articulated through the narratives of official history.

Ever conscious of the larger world—of globalization, the nation, the collapse of non-alignment, American dominance—the novel still resolutely keeps its focus on the local. Anna Guttman, in her discussion of the novel, points out that the novel may not be "an unequivocal celebration of the small in opposition to the large, despite what the title suggests" and that History "looms large" in the novel; but nevertheless, it overtly rejects "national allegory as a

governing conceit in favour of an emphasis on the domestic, the marginal, and the unspeakable".[23]

Among other things, Roy's The God of Small Things emphasizes the material or economic aspects of globalization as well as the asymmetry it creates between different parties on the cultural level. Margaretta Petersson comments: "Through the technique of fragmentation, local history is placed within a larger contemporary perspective where relationships between India and the West are just as asymmetrical as during the colonial times".[24]

Rushdie's later novels like The Moor's Last Sigh (1995), The Ground Beneath Her Feet (1999) and Fury (2001) are marked by what Patrick Bixby calls "the Global aesthetic". In these later novels Rushdie "writes back" to a postcolonial world that, if it has suffered from the mire of imperialism, is now swept up into the economic, political, and cultural currents of globalization.[25] In The Moor's Last Sigh Rushdie, among other intertexts and allusions, mostly refers to the narrative techniques of Bombay Talkies, to characters drawn from American television, to the advertising slogans. In this text that speak about the global age, American pop figures like the Lone Ranger and Tanto circulate with Indian movie stars, a mixture which registers not so much the hybrid national vigour of the early Moor paintings as the shallow heterogeneity of a transnational popular culture.

The fascination with the landscape of pop and kitsch, is, if anything, intensified in Rushdie's next novel, The Ground Beneath Her Feet, To chart the trajectory of Vina Apsara and Ormus Cama, musicians of Indian descent who migrate from East to West, the narrator Umeed Merchant calls on not only allusions to Hollywood movies and American TV shows, but most significantly, rock lyrics from the entire history of the genre. Rock 'n' Roll here represents the preeminent cultural phenomenon of the global age. It inhabits the mind of the Indian born narrator. Of course Rushdie shows that cultural exchanges do not always necessarily move in one direction, from West to East, but is a two-way traffic. The novel displays a certain reverence for cultural pluralism, which represents less the negative side effects of late capitalism and more of a celebratory vision of globalization as hybridity. Compared to Rushdie's celebration of the global condition, Roy's novels is a scathing critique of the negative effects of globalization. Petersson says: "Rushdie sees that which is new, the

exciting things that grow out of and are created in the hybrid aesthetics, while Roy concentrates on that which is extinguished and is smoothed out".[26]

The cultural, social and psychological displacement and other negative effects of globalization also inform Kiran Desai's Booker Prize winning novel The Inheritance of Loss (2005). In the novel Desai straddles three worlds with ease and makes a telling commentary on modern issues that beset all nations—globalization, multiculturalism, modernization, terrorism and insurgency. The novel also questions the very existence of immigrants and their strange isolated lives. Desai takes a skeptical view of the West's consumer-driven multiculturalism, and probes in a subtle yet probing manner the triumphalism of the West which glosses over the horrors that countless others suffer in an unequal and unjust world order. At such moments, Desai seems far from writers like Zadie Smith and Hari Kunzru, whose fiction takes a generally optimistic view of the processes and consequences of globalization. It is a subtle yet powerful critique of multiculturalism which is confined to the Western metropolis and academe—a multiculturalism that does not or cannot address the causes of extremism and violence in the modern world. The novel suggests that economic globalization cannot become a route to prosperity for the downtrodden.

Apart from, globalization, fundamentalism and terrorism, recent Indian English writers are much beholden to the problems of insurgency and cessation—problems that affect a large number of states in the country. Kiran Desai's novel The Inheritance of Loss which we have already discussed is set in the 1980s when the northeastern state of India, Sikkim was reeling under a terrible grip of insurgent violence. It is one of those novels (Siddhartha Deb's Point of Return is another) that depict an India reeling under growing pressures of cessiosionist movements. As in Deb's novel, the uneasy relationship between the postcolonial nation-state and its north-eastern territories provides the context for an often moving study of loneliness and pain as a historical and emotional legacy as it structures both private and social relations.

An increasing number of novels are being written which depict this insurgency problem (both ethnic and state sponsored) and ethnic assertion by communities and tribes. The Northeastern part of India is a case in point. In the multi-ethnic Indian state, assimilation and agglomeration among various ethnic groups were possible during the national movement and even when the nation-state came to be organized. But as Amedo Maiello observes, the

new Indian state adopted a "policy of benign neglect" of the communities living in the margins, and in the subsequent periods overlooked the silent, concrete internal transformations taking place among such communities/ethnic groups.[27] In India, the postcolonial leadership, emphasizing the inviolability and security of the territory, has repressed and persecuted the marginalized communities, especially the tribes of the peripheral regions. Their value systems and languages are rejected as obscurantist, and not given their due status in the larger pan-Indian scenario.

The Northeast remains a highly volatile region—politically and socially. It is still regarded as frontier region, a concept inaugurated by the British and adopted by postcolonial nation-state, and it remains more or less—marginalized from mainstream India. Various ethnic groups and communities vie for autonomy and downright 'independence' from India. Insurgency and violence have almost become a way of life, and the citizens live precarious lives in this heavily militarized region. It is only very recently that English writing from the northeast have emerged and it has helped put the region in the limelight. Unlike the nation-centric epic narratives of Rushdie and Tharoor, the writings from the northeast show a keen sense of place or rootedness, and always deals with the issues and problems most urgent and real to the region.

The spectre of secession haunts the northeast and it, along with the violence that rises with sub-nationalist ethnic assertion, terrorism, and military atrocities underwrite much of the recent writings from the northeast—Deb's The Point of Return, Temsula Ao's These Hills Called Home (2006), Indrani Rai Medhi's The Deputy Collector's Wife etc. Like Temsula Ao, Easterine Iralu in her two novels A Terrible Matriarchy (2007) and Mari deal with the nationalist assertion among the Naga tribes and the terrible experinces of the people in the militarized zone. Her novel Mari is one of the few novels in English which depicts the rarely-told history of the 2nd World War in Kohima, one of the most crucial theatres of the War that changed the tide of the War in the Eastern side. Deb's novel Surface, and very recently Siddhartha Sarma's The Grasshopper's Song represent this forgotten history and the historical experience of the War in the eastern side of India. Another important writer from the northeast is Mamang Dai who writes about Arunachal Pradesh—a state that has remained a bone of contention between India and China. In her novella The Legends of Pensam (2006), she writes about the Adi tribe of the state—an "in-between" people (in her own words) who

are caught between a traditional way of life and the onslaught of modernity, and how they are negotiating change with memory and remembrance and a terrible sense of loss.

The northeast is a complex region with heterogeneous people and communities with relatively autonomous histories. Numerous cultural groups with conflicting claims for political space and identity, and different stages of development constitute the socio-political matrix of the region. Tilottoma Misra, in her introduction to what is one of the pioneering anthologies of writings from the Northeast (both in English and in translation) writes:

> The 'seven sisters of the North-East' which had only marginal historical links with each other in pre-colonial times, had their doors open towards South-East Asia, eastern Bengal, Bhutan, and Tibet—regions with which they shared boundaries and lively commercial and cultural contacts. It was only after the Partition of the Sub-continent that the region became totally landlocked with almost all the doors closed except for a narrow corridor that kept it linked with India. The geographical isolation has led to erasures and marginalization on multiple levels, the effect of which is clearly discernible in the writings from the region.[28]

The people from the region carry a distrust against the center, and conflicts, war, cessation are tearing this region apart. The problems created by illegal migration from neighbouring countries and the resultant demographic and socio-political unrest have taken its toll on the psyche of the people who feel they have been regarded as the "Other" of the mainland India. The nation-centric epic narratives have often failed to notice the micro-stories of the region and to take account of contemporary history-in-the-making. Moreover, there is the added problem of misinterpretation, misrepresentation and stereotyping of the people and events in the northeast by the national media.

There is hardly any discussion or even mention of writers or poets from the Northeast in discussion of Indian English writing. It is as if, speaking the same language, these writers and poets are not heard. The academic engagement with Indian English writing has remained confined to canonical writers and texts, most importantly Rushdie and a few writers who followed in his wake. There is a need to study this body of writing from the Northeast, which

might make for more comprehensive and nuanced approach in writing and thinking about history and the "Idea of India".

Moreover, recent Indian English writing shows a maturity and confidence and an urge to experiment further in various genres like science fiction, political thrillers and detective fiction. Ruchir Joshi's The Last Jet-Engine Laugh is set in the year 2030 one of the most interesting futuristic novels that have come out of India and it depicts Indian history backwards upto the year 1930. The Last Jet-Engine Laugh is a book that spans an entire century, from the tumultuous '30s of the last century to the yet-to-arrive '30s of the current millennium. Some might read the novel as homage to the past, or even a sci-fi exploration of the distant future. Iconic phases in our history: the freedom struggle, Indira Gandhi's Emergency, and a future in which conflicts have given way to new, post-national alliances as well as fresh possibilities of nuclear annihilation.The war, between India and the Saudi-Pakistan alliance is one backdrop. The old war, WW2 is another, and in an interesting episode we see a captured Indian soldier Kalidas flown to a prisoner of war camp where the Indian anti-British leader Subhash Chadra Bose is being held by the Russians. This is one novel that writes the nation and its tumultuous history in a genre that is still at its infancy. Comparing this dystopic novel with two other Indian English sci-fi novels, The Calcutta Chromosome by Amitav Ghosh (1997) and Mammaries of the Welfare State (2000) by Upamanyu Chatterjee, Anna Guttman writes:

> Whereas Ghosh's novel invokes science as a tool of colonial knowledge and therefore Orientalism and oppression, The Last Jet-Engine Laugh sees forces of nationalism and internationalism making equally oppressive use of technology. In contrast to The Calcutta Chromosome, in which technology paradoxicallyhelps lead the main character to the truth of counterscience, The Last Jet-Engine Laugh associates technology more generally—from the emergence of water substitutes to new fighter planes—with violent conflict, social and political disintegration, environmental degradation, and indeterminacy. Its target is the Indian nation-state. In this, The Last Jet-Engine Laugh may most resemble Upamanyu Chatterjee's Mammaries of the Welfare State (2000). But while the latter is also set in the future, the date is almost

incidental to the satirical arc in Mammaries of the Welfare State, and, unlike Joshi's novel, technology is not a prominent concern for Chatterjee.[29]

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Vikram Chandra's recent novel Sacred Games is a political thriller that depicts India's political underbelly and the underworld and corruption. Manjiri Prabhu's The Cosmic Clues (2004) is another detective novel that charts the urban crime-scapes of modern India. Further experimentations can be seen in the emergence of graphic novels in India. Naseer Ahmed and Saurabh Singh's noir graphic novel Kashmir Pending (2007) is a tragic story of two friends set in the canvas of Kashmir militancy, fundamentalism and horrors of everyday life in the valley. These new novels and experimentations are taking Indian English novels and its re-presentation of history, both past and present, to new dimensions.

This study has already demonstrated in some detail that there is no one single "story" of India as colonial and overtly nationalist fiction and historiography claim; there are only *stories*. To attend to the multitudinous stories of India, the post-Rushdie writers, more or less, the contemporary and recent writers are taking up various other issues and problems and themes. The earlier Indian English writers like Rao, Rushdie, Tharoor, Sealy sought to depict all of India and its vast history in epic scale. The representation of India and Indian history was for them a huge project. Rushdie himself spoke of such a project in a joint interview with Arundhati Roy:

> What I'm saying is this: India allowed me to become the writer that I have become, that I could not have become otherwise. I mean, I know that this is a book [pointing to Roy's novel] about small things, and intimacies, and details, and so on and, you know, good for it. But I'm saying that there is this other project which excited me which has to do with taking on the whole damn thing, you know, and that's what I've wanted to do and tried to do [. . .].[30]

The writers under the present study have all attained great prominence in the literary canon and the global academic scenario. As we have already discussed this very prominence has rightly been the source of vigorous, even fractious, debate. This debate brings to light the faultline that divide these diasporic, metropolitan Indian English writers from the so-called

vernacular writers. Mostly this is a faultline that has profoundly inequitable consequences in terms of both economic privilege and cultural capital. Despite Rushdie's damning of vernacular Indiàn literatures, there has been awareness among some Indian English writers regarding this divide. Vikram Seth and Kiran Nagarkar, for instance, have written eloquently about this divide. There is some weight to the argument put forwarded by critics that Indian English novelists—diasporic and metropolitan as they mostly are—remain distanced from the real concerns of most Indians. In their urge to explore the "national" question through diasporic, nostalgic lenses, these writers gloss over the numerous micro hi/stories and the complex transformations and changes happening in the life of the nation and communities. When the world reads these writers as the authentic, informed informers of India, it is often forgotten that their representations can in no way be truely authentic. Priyamvada Gopal asks, "What does it mean that the world reads and believes that it comprehends 'India' through Rushdie and Roy rather than Kamleshwar (Hindi), Ambai (Tamil), or Qurrutala in Hyder (Urdu)?"[31]

It is true, to a great extent, that the representations of India and Indian history in these metropolitan writers are lopsided and biased due to market forces and their location. But a younger generation of writers like Pankaj Mishra, Alka Saraogi, Tabish Khair, Dhruba Hazarika, Siddhartha Sarma, and Siddhartha Deb etc are writng novels that show an insistent concern to grapple with just the kind of silent, local histories so soften ignored by the earlier generation of writers. In more recent novel that emerged after the fading of pan-Indian nation-centric trope in the texts of the Rushdie generation, the engagement with history has become much more diffused. Apart from engaging transnational and global issues, many of these novels are, on the other hand, about smaller places, particular towns and cities, and small histories rather than the stories of entire India. Pankaj Mishra's <u>The Romantics</u> (set in Benaras), Tabish Khair's <u>The Bus Stopped</u> (Patna), Alka Saraogi's <u>Kalikatha: Via Bypass</u> (Kolkata, 2003), Aminuddin Khan's <u>A Shift in the Wind</u> (2004) etc are novels set in various cities and towns and all of them depict histories that were ignored or were not represented by the earlier epic narratives of nation.

Even though the metropolitan, diasporic Indian English novelists like Rushdie, Ghosh, Mistry, Chandra etc. have been accused of glossing over many local, silent histories and catering to a fetishized version of India for a global readership, they have scored over regional

writers in a few points. First of all, these novels have made serious interventions into the arena of historical debate in postcolonial India and they have exposed the use and abuse of history by political forces.Secondly they have written novels that probe into the material and psuchological conditions, upheavals and negotiations of migrant subjects. The anxieties and fears and sadness of migrancy and cultural displacements in a globalized world have been memorably dealt with by these writers. Thirdly, these novelists display a much more sensitive and involved awareness regarding the dilemmas and transformations brought about by the forces of globalizations and as such their representations regarding the nation and history are aligned to the issues of glabalization.

Finally, it can be said that Indian English writing in its present state, as far as engagement of history and nation is concerned, has outgrown the earlier project of "Writing Back" in retort to colonial authority and oppression while being absorbed in a frenzied obsession to create "national allegories" in the Jamesonian sense. The writers, both the old masters and the new crop of writers are writing novels that display a confident movement towards transculturation and transnationalism. Rushdie's later novels, Vikram Seth's An Equal Music (1999), Githa Hariharan's When Dreams Travel (1999), Sunetra Gupta's A Sin of Colour (1999), Anita Desai's Fasting, Feasting (1999), Ghosh's River of Smoke (2011) are not set only in India and they are not just writing about the state of the nation. The spatial locations of these texts illustrate a familiarity with several metropolises in the West and outside India, with an unproblematic passage from East to West and back. Novels like these show a very evident receptivity to Western culture while lucidly proffering a healthy critique of Indian society. Even though the Indian moorings are never denied, Indian English novels are increasingly attempting to sidestep the earlier project of binding itself to the epic task of writing the nation as a way to contest the colonial hegemony.

With some notable exceptions the Anglophone novel from and of India has liberated itself from a sense of address to the West and from "anxieties of Indianness", taking its place in the Indian literary landscape with confidence but without complacency. It is undoubtedly a genre that has come into its own, exuding now a sense of belonging to a cultural and political context that is at once marked by very specific histories and constantly evolving. Its most important writers (themselves bi-or multilingual) are attentive to and remain troubled by the politics of linguistic faultlines and the skewed dynamics of working in a language accorded

disproportionate cultural and economic privilege. This is a genre that began with an interest in how to read the past and continues to remain concerned with the question of the burden of history. In it's attempts to understand the pain of the present through reading the past, the Anglophone novel is an engaged and dynamic participant in a conversation that is taking place a cross the literary spectrum of India. At the same time, the engagement with history in Indian English novel has become diffused and wide-ranging, but nonetheless retains the variety of forms and genre, and a level of commitment and gusto that propels it towards greater and unexpected heights.

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