CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

*Every literature must seek the things that belong to its peace, must,*

*in other words, speak of a particular place, evolve out of the*  

*necessities of its history, past and current, and the aspirations and*  

*destiny of its people.*

(Chinua Achebe)

Advancement in travel and communication technologies has certainly made the world a global village and all of us have become inhabitants of a space without borders of nation, place, community, religion et al. These transformations have helped the erstwhile borderland dwellers to express and articulate their positions. They are now capable of filling the void created by the suppression of their voices. They are now in a position to challenge the foundational histories based on monolithic accounts of the “master narrative.” In fact with the cessation of the era of European imperialism, questions of power, resistance to power, culture, ethnicity etc have been increasingly raised by people across the world to better their understanding of their place in the changing global scenario. These questions have also troubled the minds of writers, who being the
intellectual representatives of the society find themselves in a doubly responsible position — that is to raise questions and to try to find out probable answers to them.

Writers from the erstwhile colonies especially Indian writers began their literary voyage in compliance with the dominant realist-mimetic mode which involved sketching round or flat characters, and writing in a proper, non-deviant, pretty English. However there were some writers like Raja Rao and G. V. Desani who dared to experiment with both language and form. They attempted fusion of an Indian sensibility with the “alien” language, and turned to literary, social, and philosophical Indian traditions for structural patterns and narrative modes. They also attempted at this stage to review and reinterpret history and thereby compelled the readers to understand their present from the vantage point of the past. They put the present in the context of history by yoking together religion, myth and history. Thus, the post-colonial writers’ major pre-occupation remains a search for identity not only of their roots but also of the culture and for this they return again and again to the past. Hence, to understand and critically analyze their texts, knowledge of various approaches to literature becomes vital. In the first part of this thesis a brief but detailed overview has been undertaken of the theoretical frameworks that paved the way to what we call postcolonial theory today, as attempts to dismantle the presumption of universal and absolute truths, challenging canonical ideas and texts. Notions of knowledge, power and language discussed by these theories have helped to understand the implications of the novels chosen in a better light. Post-colonialism which occurred as a direct consequence of the dual impact of the forces of colonialism and imperialism provided the space, literally and figuratively, for the new readings of the past. A study of the past remains incomplete without bringing into focus the New
Historicism, which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in response to the ahistorical approach of the critics towards literary texts. This new historicism emphasized that the text should be analyzed with an eye on history. It differs from the earlier historical-biographical criticism which saw literature as a reflection of the historical world in which it was produced and that viewed history as stable, linear and recoverable — a narrative of fact. New Historicism defines history in broader terms than its predecessor and includes all of the cultural, social, political, anthropological discourses at work in any given age. New Historicism finds relationship between the historical context of the writing and a modern reader’s interpretation of the writing. Thus, it can be said that a New Historicist analyzes literature in wider perspective — examining both how the writer’s times affected the work and how the work reflects the writer’s times. This in turn recognizes the fact that the current cultural contexts are also reflected through that critic’s conclusions. With this theory as the basis of study this part of the thesis also delves in detail the factors involved in the making of historical narratives and the historical novels. Concentrated efforts have been made to trace at length the emergence of the Western historical novel on the literary front.

The historical novel arose in England in the nineteenth century around the time of Napoleon’s collapse and enjoyed immense popularity with the publishing of the *Waverley* novels of Sir Walter Scott. Though novels with historical themes were written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they were historical only as regards their purely external choice of theme and costume. These novels treated history as mere costumery. A study of the advent of the historical novel in Indian Writing in English has also been done. Indian writers, for whom the themes of revolution and foreign occupation were
close to their hearts than the themes of social class and manners, lapped up this new genre and eagerly produced a number of works with history as their warp and woof. Unfortunately, most of the early historical novels had romance as their basis with hardly anything to do with facts. 1930s saw the revival of the historical novel with writers taking up themes from history once again. These works, despite playing a major role in the nationalist awakening, were at the same time lacking in experimentation. History in these novels was a mere chronological recording of events. Further, this part also introduces the concept of Indianness and the creation of an Indian consciousness in Indian English novels. This national consciousness is more evident in Indian writers writing in English rather than writers writing in the regional languages and is reflected through the writer’s allegiance to the intrinsic life, culture and language of the people of the country. The emergence of the new crop of Indian writers, who played a significant role in the resurgence of the modern historical novel, gave a breath of fresh air to Indian English Writing and helped to take it to global frontiers. These writers, who indulged in experimentation and a playful use and abuse of historical data in their works, were the new kids on the block, the more confident lot attempting to stretch the possibilities of literature to hitherto unheard, uncharted oceans and hence carve a niche for themselves in the global literary world.

Kanthapura and Kamla Markandaya’s The Golden Honeycomb from the viewpoint of history and Indianness reveals that the two authors writing about almost the same theme employ different strategies to narrativise the complex history of India. Both the novels cover a specific period of the history of India and follow a definite chronology. Kanthapura, which has its setting in a small village of south India, concerns itself with the non-violent, non-cooperative movements of 1919-22 and 1930-31 and its impact on the social and political life of its country. The novel traces the growth of the feeling of dissatisfaction among the masses with the British regime and brings to surface the conflict consequent upon the non-payment of taxes. It covers the history of the whole decade of 1920s and ends with the compromise between the Congress and the British Government in the form of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931. The Golden Honeycomb though covers a period of history that stretches from the end of the nineteenth century to the nineteen twenties, has its major focus on the influence and spread of the Gandhian movement in India. It has been observed that the time period taken up by both the novelists in their novels is almost overlapping and the theme of national awakening is also common to both the novels. What is different is the treatment of the theme. While Raja Rao uses an uneducated old lady as his narrator who actually participated in the movement against the British and narrates the first hand account of the entire episode, Kamala Markandaya uses the traditional omniscient, authoritative third person narrator who tries to present a detached view of the whole situation. Instead of identifying with one character, the author, through her narration, maintains an impersonal stance, giving the reader an impression of complete detachment and an objective view from the balcony. However, a deeper analysis reveals that objectivity is never absolute for though the writer
may try his/her best, an innocuous word or phrase or some ironic twist to a rather
innocent sentence, may prove otherwise. Rao’s narrator, Achakka, keeps the reader
spellbound by the flow of her narration and the reader remains anxious and in a what-
happened-next state. Her stream of memories forms the narration of the novel and despite
many digressions all seems natural coming from her mouth. Markandaya’s detached
narrator loses the reader somewhere in the middle of the text. The reader has nothing
much to guess and at some point of time the third person narration gives way to internal
monologues. Sometimes there is a shift in the point of view and one or other of the
characters are identified with. This looking at things from multiple view points and yet
trying to keep a distance between the author and characters seemingly gives an objective
view but it is not always so. At times credibility is sacrificed and the reader loses interest
in the story. Similarly there is a problem with the choice of location too. Markandaya
makes an attempt to give a particular state as the background to the story but Devapur
like its characters never comes to life. Devapur seems nothing more than a state of mind,
rather than a state of India. All the places mentioned in the novel are not converted into
places that the reader can easily recognize or relate to. On the other hand Raja Rao in the
very beginning of his novel tells his readers that his village is like any other village of
India and what was happening in that village at that time was happening all over the
country. This village, thus, becomes a miniature representation of the whole country and
rises from the particular to the general. Having considered all the above said aspects, the
use of language and the representation of history, it can be said that although both the
novels are historical in nature it is noticeable that in  The Golden Honeycomb  references
to historical happenings are used merely as a support for the general framework of the
story. History has been subordinated to the presentation of ideas. No reforms, acts, dates, or leaders’ names are specified (except for Gandhi) in *The Golden Honeycomb* and same is the case with Rao’s *Kanthapura*. Yet, Rao’s rhythmical language, his experimentation with style and minute details transports the reader back to that period of history which the author has selected making it a little more realistic and historical. Similarly, Rao’s use of *Puranic* style of narration, Indianised-English, use of mythology, interweaving of Indian Philosophy and spirituality into the texture of the novel makes it more Indian than Markandaya’s *The Golden Honeycomb*.

A comparison of historicity and Indianness has also been done between two novels with similar themes, that is, dealing with the period of Indian history in which freedom of the country was achieved by paying the price of partition. These novels are — Manohar Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* and Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi*— published in the years 1964 and 1975 respectively. Though published after almost a decade, Nahal’s *Azadi* like Malgonkar’s *Bend in the Ganges* has as its backdrop the period of struggle for independence, the Gandhian impact on freedom movement, and the attainment of independence and its aftermath. Malgonkar’s leanings towards history and historical fiction are understandable considering the fact that he was a historian before venturing into the domain of Indo-English fiction. Due to this extreme closeness to Indian history, *A Bend in the Ganges* turns out to be not only well-planned and well-constructed but also highly informative and knowledgeable. He employs third person narrative technique in unfolding the plot of his novel and to maintain objectivity, yet at times being a historian he is unable to remain detached and dispassionate about events or characters. There are occasional distortions of facts and figures. Malgonkar’s association with British army
officers during his service in the army does show his inclination towards them and at many places in the novel he unconsciously shows Englishmen as the ideal figures of honesty and denigrates Indians for lack of sincerity and sense of justice. The theme of violence versus non-violence is central to the novel and it is one theme which has been beautifully handled by the author. Without taking sides or taking help of narration the author cleverly through the unfolding of events exposes the pseudo-Gandhian followers who take up violence at the first possible opportunity as also the followers of violent means who are engulfed by the fire started by their own violence. He gives a detailed and sweeping account of social, political and historical circumstances of India beginning from early 1947 to the partition of the country and subsequent migration of the refugees. His historical vision is so precise and powerful and the description so true to life that at times the novel reads like a documentary of those tempestuous times. Due to his unmistakable historical sense, quite often, his focus shifts from the individual to the event and the presentation of this event turns out to be highly authentic and marked by sharp detail and epic dimension. If Malgonkar’s novel reads like a documentary then Chaman Nahal’s Azadi gives the reader an impression of a chronicle novel. Nahal refers to details from recent history as the Champaran agitation of 1917, the 1929 session at Lahore, the Quit India Movement of 1942, the arrival of Wavell as Viceroy, the Simla Conference of 1945, the British Cabinet Mission of 1947, the arrival of Lord Mountbatten as Viceroy and the Radcliffe Boundary Commission. Like a true historical novelist, who not only takes the setting and events and some characters of his novel from history but also makes these events and issues crucial for the central characters and narrative, Nahal too, depicts the past epoch and shows the men and women and their behaviour alive in his work of
art. Nahal emphasizes on an epic scale and in a classical style how people, though living together, became strangers to each other. Covering the period from the announcement of the Cabinet Mission Plan on 3 June 1947 to the murder of Mahatma Gandhi on 30 January 1948, the novel dramatizes the stupendous drama of history and the way it affected the lives and feelings of its numerous characters that represent the people of those times. To highlight this drama of partition, Nahal employs the technique of shifting viewpoints and employs two centres of consciousness to enable the reader to understand their actions and reactions and at the same time feels one to one with them. Interestingly enough, Nahal not only uses the Arun-Lala Kanshi Ram duo to present his views about freedom but also some English characters like Bill Davidson who are against this unjust partition of the country. Not only in India but in other countries also, Bill Davidson is against this mockery of justice by the British Empire. He openly expresses his dissent against the unjust policies of the British officials. Nahal’s characters continue to show signs of growth and maturity as the novel proceeds and they undergo certain unavoidable changes by the end of the novel. The novel begins with a note of realism and shows reverence to the accuracy of date and event. Nahal, throughout the novel shows this adherence to the truthful depiction of facts, events, dates and names. He takes upon himself the burden of a historian rather than being an artist, with a careful and research oriented representation of historical accounts. Nahal’s Azadi has its roots deeply embedded in social realism. A close study of the novel reveals certain aspects about the treatment of history at the hands of the author. Some of the aspects show him to be a master storyteller but one aspect that goes against him is that he treats history as something sacred, and has also been utmost careful in treating it as “mere chronicle”. His
records about the places and dates are true to his word and are maintained in a chronological sequence as if he were a historian instead of a storyteller. The fictional part of the novel appears to be a sub-plot in the scheme of things and the novelist’s main focus lies with the narration of the holocaust. Thus, it has been observed that these writers are master storytellers in their own accounts yet when it comes to writing historical details, they show reluctance to indulge in even slight playfulness with it. History, for them is something extremely sacred and absolute and hence their art takes a back seat somewhere when it comes to writing a historical novel.

Two novels that represent the new face of Indian Writing in English — Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* — have also been analyzed from the view point of history and Indianness. Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* is a novel about Indian Independence, the partition and its aftermath starting from 1915 right up to the Emergency promulgated by Mrs Indira Gandhi. The novel focuses on the collective experience of a people and the history of the nation along with the personal history of the narrator-protagonist Saleem Sinai. The autobiographical material of the novel is chosen to suit the requirements of the story and presenting history as autobiography is a means of linking the individual component of the society to the collective stream of history. Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* in a similar vein attempts to record the history of modern India linking it to the mythological past of the country. The historical account of India covers a time period beginning from the nationalist movement to the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Since *Midnight’s Children* was the first novel to attempt such experimentation in Indian Writing in English, where most of the ground rules associated with the form of fiction were broken, it became a trend setter for
most of the writers that came after him. That is why Shashi Tharoor’s novel appears to be not only influenced by *Midnight’s Children* but also takes Rushdie’s legacy further. Both the writers employ almost similar narrative techniques with omniscient, all-knowing, self-conscious narrators that narrate a first-hand account of the national events, always relying on their memory and conscious of the fact that their interpretation of history is always to some degree fictive and an over-interpretation. Both the novels refuse to adhere to the classic norms and simplified style of storytelling and instead grapple with the plurality and complexities of Indian social life. Thus they endeavour to subvert the Western notion of “History” and the imperialist record of Indian history. As already discussed such efforts to subvert history often disregard the dictates of “purity” and “unity” and question the Western traditions of historiography. These writers challenge the dominant ideology of the West and employ techniques like parody, satire, pastiche etc. in their narrativisation of history. It is through various strategies like the art of narrativization and historiography that writers like Rushdie and Tharoor are able to present the necessarily fragmentary and fragmented histories of their countries. For example, Rushdie employs a three-pronged strategy in his narrative technique. He presents (i) an integration of the historical setting with the narrative destinies of the three generations of a Muslim family, (ii) a rich management of myth and fantasy, (iii) relating the two areas of History and Timelessness to the quest of identity by the protagonist. A similar technique has been employed by Tharoor in his novel, especially the coalescing of mythological past with the modern past, thereby, merging the recent past with the Timeless past of the country which is in the form of mythology. Both the writers return to Indian traditions and texts to narrativise the post-colonial history of India. Rushdie turns
to the age old and ancient pattern of oral storytelling, hinting at the “infinite possibilities of the country.” Tharoor also chooses a form suitable to the retelling of the political history of 20th century India through a fictional recasting of events, episodes and characters from the *Mahabharata* and explores the kinds of stories a society tells about itself, the forces and events that make and unmake a country with a mammoth past like India. Thus, both the novels turn out to be at once experimental with a clever blending of history, autobiography, mytholog y, political allegory and the realm of fantasy. Rushdie like a magician gallops through current newspapers and their headlines and putting them on the caps of family, friends and relatives making it appear as if the history of India is an album, a family album rather than a record and further goes on to show that the autobiography of a common man contains and participates in the making of history, something which had never been done before. Similarly Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* recognizes the fact that complete and “true” history of a country as diverse and complex as India can never be written and to reveal its rich diversity, it must be written again and again, every time with a new view point as every account will inevitably be partial and incomplete. The narrator of his novel admits the partial nature of any account of history and human mind’s limitation of the extent of knowledge acquired. Man may try his best to select, interpret and arrange the facts of the living past yet truth is jeopardized by inaccuracy. Having discussed all these arguments it can be claimed that these two novels with their new found voice are a powerful means of subversion of Western paradigms as well as representatives of the tradition and culture of their country, which is the need of the hour too.
The works of two novelists belonging to a religious minority group of India, Rohinton Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey* and Khushwant Singh’s *Delhi: A Novel*, have been discussed further in this part of the thesis. The two writers in their novels reject the previous stories about their characters and weave their own with their power of imagination. While Mistry looks at the post-independence historical events from a new dimension and fuses facts with fiction keeping the Parsi community as the central conscious of his novel, Singh picks up multiple characters from the pages of history and narrates history from their points of view. Singh’s characters include ordinary men and women and sometimes important historical figures that have always been presented in dark shades by the established history. Singh, like a master strokes-man gives them multiple hues showing their shades of gray, which are neither black nor white. He uses kaleidoscopic vision to present characters and events chosen from the periods of Mughal Empire, British Empire and post-independent India. Mistry in *Such a Long Journey* exploits history to delve deeper into broader concerns of Parsis in India. The history of Parsi community is artistically juxtaposed with the history of a particular period of India. Mistry narrates the event of the exodus of Parsis who came all the way from Persia to India in the 7th century A.D. Referring to the ancient roots of the Parsis, Gustad Noble, the protagonist of the novel asserts that their prophet Zarathustra lived more than fifteen hundred years before the son of God was born, a thousand years before the Buddha, two hundred years before Moses. He further discusses the amount of influence Zoroastrianism has had on Judaism, Christianity and Islam. There are references to various wars in the novel as also to various historical events like the Pak-invasion of Kashmir in 1948, Indo-China war of 1962, Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971, the birth of Bangladesh, the
Nagarwala Case of 1960s, Nationalisation of Banks by Indira Gandhi, so on and so forth. In fact Mistry intentionally weaves his story around the Nagarwala Case of 1960s in which a Parsi was implicated and jailed for embezzlement of funds of RAW by impersonating as Mrs Gandhi’s secretary. Mistry amalgamates fact with fiction and gives a fictional name Major Jimmy Bilimoria to present the fictional account of the Nagarwala episode from his own viewpoint. Mistry also uses Dinshawji as his mouthpiece in protesting against the American hegemony, American domination of the world both militarily and economically. This clever amalgamation of the text with history, politics, religion and anthropology gives him a distinct standing in the present day writers of the world. While referring to the picture of the American soldiers killing terrorists, published in the newspapers, he openly condemns them. The novel on the whole fulfils many of the conditions required of a historical novel but at the same time at certain places Mistry denigrates Mrs Indira Gandhi unnecessarily, thereby making the novel seem more like propaganda. Mistry seems to be settling some kind of a personal score against her and reflects his personal vendetta while making an effort to restore the lost honour of the Parsis in India. Khushwant Singh’s Delhi, on the other hand is a superb work of craftsmanship with technical excellence embodied by the artistic mingling of fact and fiction with a persistent sense of balance thereby ensuring that neither fiction distorts the facts nor the facts spoil the fiction. Even a more significant level of analysis in this novel, apart from technical excellence, is the brilliance in choosing the point of view in the novel. Instead of choosing a third-person, omnipresent, omniscient narrative mode, the novelist adopts a first-person narrative mode. By using this mode of narration, the author not only authenticates his material but also offers enough room for variation. Though the
author speaks in his own voice, he is constantly shifting his position — sometimes he is
detached, sometimes on the periphery, and sometimes in the centre. Singh’s creativity is
also manifest in his art of characterization. All the characters appear to be a part of an
impressive portrait gallery where one by one they seem to come to life to tell their stories.
Historical characters like Nadir Shah, Aurangzeb, Bahadur Shah Zafar, appear in their
complete finery along with full pomp and splendour. The character of Bhagmati, the
eunuch, has been used by the author as an extended metaphor throughout the novel.
Another unique feature of the novel is its linguistic experimentation. The language of the
novel loaded with sting of irony and bawdy humour denounces the dominant truth and
provides an alternative perspective. Thus, Delhi has been written on an epic scale with a
huge canvas, magnanimous action and larger than -life characters. Singh took about 25
years to complete Delhi, which is an indicator that the author must have put in a lot of
effort and research in the creation of this novel. As a result, the author effectively
awakens distant, vanished ages and enables us to live through them again in the precise
manner that they lived and in true, authentic colours of those bygone days. Hence Delhi
is a milestone in the corpus of Indian Writing in English and a landmark achievement of
its author, Khushwant Singh.

Having discussed all these historical novels from a post-colonial perspective, it is
time to answer a few pertinent questions like, what pulls a man and especially a writer of
fiction to the past. Why do writers of fiction time and again return to the past? And
finally, why do the post-colonial writers turn to the past of their countries?
The process of migration and exile are two factors that have always led man with destabilization of the fixities of space, place and nation. If mass migration within the West was the defining feature of modernity, large scale migrations from the East to the West, not only of the elite but also of subaltern cosmopolitans mark the postmodern era. Migrations in the past were mostly forced pertaining to natural (famine or flood), economic (in search of resources) or religious (the exodus of the Jews) reasons. But in the modern day world most of the migrations are voluntary. Yet, what binds the two is the fact that whatever the reason of migration, man always yearns to return to his roots. His immigration or exile excommunicates him from his community and his identity is dislocated from its human centre. This sense of dispossessed, dislocation when turned into writing becomes an anguished cry and often these narratives are nostalgic in nature. A sense of the past is overbearing in these narratives. Though, colonialism does not involve a physical displacement of the subject race yet there is a sense of displacement, culturally, one is dispossessed of his culture, language, tradition and even identity. Hence, it is perhaps most natural for man and especially the post-colonial writers to return to their past because it is the past that holds the meaning of their present and the key to their identity. This questioning of the present in context with the past makes our understanding of the dependence of present upon past somewhat more explicit resulting in a more critical history. In fact the interrelationship of past and present can further be elaborated by the fact that the past and present are connected in epistemology (stemming from the Greek ‘episteme’, meaning knowledge). In order to improve our understanding of the past, we must use what is available in the present. And in order to understand the present, we must turn to the past.
Mixing of temporality with spatiality is one of the techniques employed by the post-colonial writers to reconstruct the history of their country. They mix the timelessness of the distant past with the time-bound, spatial history of the recent past and thereby produce an equally valid, alternative version of the established history. To put together present with the historical past, the modern man and his mooring, the body and the soul, they intermingle space and time, past and present and thus, celebrate multiplicity over singularity, entertain ambiguity over certainty, enjoy diversity over uniformity. Through a playful irreverence in their fiction, they subvert and interrogate the Eurocentric myth of Meaning — the regime of Truth, Authenticity and the monocentrism of Colonial discourse. Almost similar views are shared by the critics of New Historicism, who believe that history does not just mean the events that occurred in any given age. History of a place or people also involves culture, clothing, food, and every other aspect of life during that time period. So, while reading a historical novel, the reader should not rely on the "facts" he uncovers. Instead he should use these “facts” about the historical period or event as a stepping stone to discover the truth behind the fiction. Hence, historicity and Indianness are both instrumental in a writer’s search for identity. This also involves an extensive use of imagination and a study of the time period on the part of the writer and a judicious and objective interpretation on the part of the reader.

To conclude, this whole work has been an attempt to trace the development of the Indian English novel in relation to history and Indianness. It has been analyzed how history and Indianness are an effervescent presence in the works of the writers of Indian fiction. While analyzing the historical representations an effort has been made to expose the ways these authors empower silenced groups through the power of the word. There
are no easy or permanent answers to the complexities of power structures yet incorporation and assimilation may be possible forms of change and inclusion into society. These facts also illustrate that a writer of fiction involved in writing about the history of his country is as much a historian as a writer of facts. The only difference between the two is that the novelist’s account comes rather close to truth rather than the historian’s.

‘Truth’ and the concept of ‘discovery of truth’ form an essential part of Indian philosophy and hence Indianness. Indianness, as discussed earlier, entails with it an integral cultural awareness, an awareness of the entire Indian heritage which includes its history, philosophy and language but still cannot be defined as a concept. It is more or less a thing of realization, of perception. It is an ingrained quality of the mind, of the temperament of people belonging to that particular setup. In fact it is a spontaneous flow of the heritage of Indian culture and not just actions that develop an imaginative faculty. It is something deeply embedded in the creative spirit of India whether the writer writes from India or outside India. To assert his/her Indianness, the writer does not have to make its presence felt; rather being an artist it reflects in his/her creation in subtle ways, through language, narratology or technique. When Lord Macaulay introduced English language into the Indian education system, his aim was to completely anglicize India and equated the process of anglicisation with civilization and Christianity. Macaulay’s dream of civilizing and hence anglicizing the country both mentally and intellectually could not be realized because in a country like India having one of the oldest heritage and culture and civilization of its own, people were not ready to renounce their past, their history, traditions and culture. In fact one of the important consequences of the use of English
language by the Indians was that it stimulated a new consciousness among the people, of political and cultural nationalism. It rather encouraged the quest on the part of both writers and readers for the true meaning of the Indian experience of history in relation to the West. Earlier Indian novelists writing in English used to be conscious of the fact that their medium of expression as well as the form of expression were both borrowed and felt this to be a hindrance in their creativity. But many writers have since proved that English as an alien medium does not work as a barrier against real insight into Indian mind and circumstances. On the contrary it gives the Indian writer a wider audience, in India and abroad and leads the writer on a path of progressive self-discovery for himself and for the nation. The Indian novelists today ‘create’ with an originality of experience. Theirs are the thought and imagery, idiom and consciousness of their own country’s milieu. With this new found essence called Indianness these novelists have successfully achieved a universal vision through the representation of a real slice of Indian life. Their novels reveal the Indian character and Indian life to the readers outside India, and because of a common cultural background, share the novelists’ experiences with the readers of their own country.

This is exactly how the present day historical novels too differ from their predecessors. These works are different, both in technique as well as sensibility. The writers of these historical fictions confidently experiment with technique and write with a new found self-assurance as well as sensibility. Powered with these two, the new generation of writers, not only destabilize the given versions of history but also subvert them and sometimes install newer versions to correct the relations of power in contemporary Indian society. What they ultimately try to underline is the continuance of
the historical process, the pastness of the present and the presentness of the past. T. S. Eliot’s version of time past, present and future in his *Four Quartets* seems quite apt here:

*Time present and time past*

*Are both perhaps contained in time future,*

*And time future contained in time past.*