Conclusion

The preceding chapters attempt to make an analysis of the new poetics of political fiction and the fresh and innovative strategies of demystification employed by the three contemporary novelists; Salman Rushdie, O. V. Vijayan and Shashi Tharoor. The traumatic ambivalence between the political and the personal within the post-Independence Indian society sensitized Indian creative writers to undertake significant literary projects. They relished in dealing with an entirely different genre of Indian writing. Theme, form and structure were subjected to rigorous experimentation by the imaginative minds of these writers. There is neither a predictable evolution of the story nor a logical conclusion in their works. Multiplicity of problems encompassed by their fictional realms makes their novels incomprehensible. The personality of the characters in these novels evolves out of the interaction between their emotions and ideology. These writers tried to reflect and refract the concerns of a society in the throes of modernity and also of the preoccupations and dilemmas of the post-Independence political situation of the country. They used the literary medium for ventilating their aspirations of nationalism and modernity and for explorations into the quintessential reality of India. Springing from the same sensitive crucible of artistic
temperament, these novelists made a violent attack on the degenerating structures of power politics.

Extremely disenchanted by the atrocities of the power-hungry politicians, these writers discarded all prevalent parameters of fictional writing and adopted new strategies of demystification. The plasticity of the medium of fiction enabled them to experiment with unconventional poetics in their fictionalization. Besides, they needed new canons of writing for the fictional encapsulation of the political turbulence of India since the existing ones seem to be quite inadequate for the same.

Contemporary political situation necessitated a complete deviation from the conventional methods of novel writing. Realism yielded to fresh stylistic devices such as satire, magic realism, fantasy, metafiction, irony and so on. Descriptive writing was discarded; characters began to think aloud and complex structures and multiple perspectives were adopted. Rushdie, Vijayan and Tharoor belong to the same category of political novelists whose sensitive temperament reacted alike to the prostitution of democracy and freedom, earned through the sweat and blood of the great leaders of India. *Midnight’s Children, The Saga of Dharmapuri* and *The Great Indian Novel*-works chosen for structural analysis, represent a distinct form of political imagination. The Emergency of 1975 was the immediate cause
that ignited the creative imagination of the authors of these novels. They caught the deplorable Indian political situation with the help of fresh fictional methods.

Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* heralded the arrival of post modernist sensibility in Indian literary scene. It is pivotal in the history of Indian English fiction in that it popularized, if not inaugurated a new way of writing in India. The momentous work covers a span of over sixty years and the lives of its characters are inextricably linked to the political events of the contemporary time. And these events in turn, definitely cast a shadow on the personal lives of the characters as well. Rushdie’s world is a replica of the multi-religious Indian society with Saleem, Padma, Mary and others. For fictional purpose; Rushdie uses the strategies of parody, irony, fantasy, mockery, paradoxes, pun, myth, self-reflexivity, contradictions and repetitive sentences. Irony and fantasy subvert the existing social order by presenting what is lacking in it and engaging in a negative relationship with it. The innovative style of *Midnight’s Children*, co-mingling Mughal paintings with the architectures of Hindu temples plays out the theme of pluralistic Indian society. The use of the first person narration is an ingenious tactics of Rushdie for heightened dramatic effect.
Rushdie perfected the technique of magic realism as the most expressive form of the contemporary sensibility. Magic realism combines the fantastic and the realist. It is through the fantastic that the realist makes its voice heard in the *Midnight’s Children*. Tapping the special effects of magic realism, Rushdie evokes the picture of a world which is distorted, fissured and incredible. Rushdie emulates the magical nature of the Arabian Nights and its magic effects are imaginatively deployed to criticize the nauseating politics of post-Independence India. The thousand and one midnight’s children itself is a parallel to the similarly numbered Arabian Nights. Rushdie employs the possibilities of magic realism exuberantly when he describes the telepathic abilities of Saleem. All the midnights’ children are provided with extraordinary abilities to communicate with each other telepathically. For Rushdie:

> Reality is a question of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems—but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible, . . . tiny details assume grotesque proportions; the illusion dissolves or rather, it becomes clear that the illusion itself is reality. . . . (MC 229)

Hence Rushdie by the deft deployment of magic realism takes his readers for a journey in “the basket of invisibility” (MC 531).
Rushdie re-awakens the traditional Indian story telling mode with multi-layered stories and multifaceted characters which eventually contribute to the overwhelming appeal of the novel. He admits his indebtedness to the *Panchatantra* mode of narration in the *Midnight's Children*. Social and political details are interspersed with various mixtures of spicy anecdotes, mythological lore, diverting comedy, dense cover of fantasy, and all this was done with effective linguistic exuberance. The narration of the novel was done in a judicious way by selectively recalling the part from the vantage point of the present. This method equips the author to re-assemble Saleem’s personal life and the history of his country in a chronological order. Thus the fictional fabric is enabled to accommodate fact and fiction unobtrusively. This narrative mode smoothly leads the reader through a time span of sixty years. The potential of the cinematic device of narration is further utilized by Rushdie to defamiliarize reality and make reality appear strange thereby renewing our perception of what lies around us.

Rushdie lays bare the practice and methods of fictionalization in his novel, so that the readers may have an understanding of how fiction is written. *Midnight's Children* is a supreme example of historiographic metafiction. Such postmodernist fictional frame re-introduces the historical context and helps the author to actively intervene in the problematics of history. The metafictional
narrative style enables the author to give a singularly new interpretation of the history of India. It also problematizes the nature of historical discourse and pays attention to the problems which are unique to historical reconstructions in India. The plot structure of *Midnight’s Children* also deviates from linearity, thereby liberating the narrative from the constraints of the realistic unities of time and space. The spatial and temporal montages are designed to spur the reader’s imagination. It generates a time sense that is fluid, where the past and the present co-exist to provide a holistic vision of reality, beyond human limitations. The most daring attempt of demystification by Rushdie was in adapting the ironic Pidgin English of the urban middle class of post-independence India. Rushdie comments on his use of Indianized English:

One of the changes has to do with attitudes towards the use of English. . . . And I hope all of us share the view that we can not simply use it the way the British did, that it needs re-making for our own purposes. (“Describing Reality” 5)

Rushdie dethroned the King’s English from its haloed state by incorporating regional terms into it there by producing a new language which caters to his fictional needs. In doing so, the colonial hang up about using the colonizer’s language has been overcome; creating the sense of common link language across
regions, religions and classes. There is an intermingling of styles, dialects and registers and the archaic in Rushdie’s language. Probably, only such a language could effectively express the emotional make up of characters in an Indian backdrop. He incorporates the vernacular words in his narration as though his readers ought to know them already. His masonry makes native idiom and speech stand out as unique decorations of the language. This subversion of the ‘English’ English did have certain socio-political ramifications since language functions as cultural ambassador of a nation. Indigenous cultural, social, religious customs; value systems and belief systems are coded into the languages with ingenuity and care. The hybrid language of Rushdie costumes an anguished accent, anguish at the betrayal of trust by those who promised to guard freedom and dignity. Granting English the status of an Indian language, gives it sufficient eclecticism for expressions of indigenous experiences. The contemporary Indian English writers are tremendously influenced by Rushdie’s manoeuvring of the language. They have copiously adapted elements taken from his playfulness of language and flippancy of thought and expression.

Allegory, another demystifying technique is used by Rushdie for political purposes. Midnight’s Children is a social invective presented in the garb of allegory. The novel allegorically reminds
of the untapped potential and promise inherent in the new generation. It is a social tirade presented in the form of allegory; a carefully constructed allegory of modern India. Rushdie employs scatological imagery as a method of demystification. The description of the city of Amritsar contains scatological imagery which is strongly reminiscent of the descriptions of Gulliver's voyage to Laputa. The city is depicted as constantly smelling of excrement.

It is issued from the rumps of the horses between the shafts of the city's many tongas, ikkas and gharries; and mules and men and dogs attended nature's calls, mingling in a brotherhood of shit. But there were cows, too: sacred kine roaming the dusty streets, each patrolling its own territory, staking its claims in excrement. (MC 36)

The juxtaposition of animals and human beings into one brotherhood of shit is suggestive of the author's disgust with the filthy nature of the city life. The stylistic experimentations by the author resulted in an altogether new fictional experience. It has the same effect on the eyes and ears of the reader as a magnificent circus performance; a scene that is filled with colours, zest, dare-devilry and loud bravado. Rushdie has woven a text that fuses tradition and modernity to create an open-ended, post-Independence political discourse. The narrative and the theme go
together presenting the personal as well as the untold story of the Indian subcontinent. *Midnight’s Children* belongs to the comic-epic genre; a form which is a fusion of Homeric, mythic and tragic connotations. Rushdie employs the epic form as a strategy of liberation and the comic as a strategy to express events that are too painful to be expressed.

The Indian society after independence was punctuated by the continued influence of colonialism. Along with economic exploitation the colonizers tried to dominate the psyche of their freed colony by a deliberate intervention in the political life of the native, re-shaping their perception about themselves and their relationship with the world. The imperial regime proved so influential that it affected almost every facet of modern Indian life such as the society, culture, economy, politics and administration. This dangerous and precarious predicament combined with degenerated and power-hungry politicians of India, produced an extremely melancholic and repressive social condition. The responsive writers of the time reacted violently against such a regressive situation by adopting unconventional fictional techniques.

O. V. Vijayan makes a devastating attack on the corroding power structures of independent India using totally unconventional strategies of demystification in *The Saga of*
Dharmapuri. Reflecting on the concerns and predilections of the times, Vijayan makes an innovative exploration into the impact of colonial encounter on the cultural, social and political lives of India. The existing expressive devices were found to be inadequate to depict the post-Nehruvian political realities in India. Vijayan gives an unusual treatment to the subject with extraordinary images and symbols in order to shock the readers. He is filled with righteous indignation when he looks at the fleeting phantasmagoria of shocking realities. The grimly bizarre picture of the horrors of existence in the modern state is carefully drawn using the techniques of modernist fiction. Scatology and eroticism are the two basic metaphors of Vijayan’s narrative technique.

Scatological images are employed to depict almost all the major events in the novel. Vijayan presents Dharmapuri as the land of shit-eaters. The elaborate pictures of the President’s defecation had a repulsive and nauseating effect on the reader. It is a revolutionary tactics to convey the limitless depravity of the rulers and the ruled in Dharmapuri. The timing of the bowel movements of the President is closely linked to the political atmosphere of Dharmapuri. It suggests the total authoritarian control over the state of Dharmapuri. The excrement venerators are symbolic of the debased sycophants. Vijayan reveals the psychological and physiological structure of a populace steeped in the dirt of
servility. The scatological imagery remains a constant feature of the narrative till the very end. Excremental vision has a close connection with the concept of necrophilia. The intimate relationship between excrement and death is explained by Norman O. Brown when he comments:

Excrement is the dead life of the body, and as long as humanity prefers a dead life to living, so long is humanity committed to treating as excrement not only its own body but the surrounding world of objects, reducing all to dead matter and inorganic magnitudes. (186)

Necrophilia which is based on a passionate affinity for dead bodies represents a degenerate dream in Vijayan. The delectable delineation of degenerate dreams is a characteristic feature of his art.

Eroticism too functions as an effective demystifying strategy in the hands of Vijayan. The political depravity and the nefarious tendencies of the President and his ministers are depicted using erotic images. The moral depravity prevalent in Dharmapuri is akin to degeneration of political values. Sex is an open means of gaining access to the seats of power and for getting things done in daily life. When the dirt of politics is transformed into erotic degeneration, the subject matter and mode of discourse become one.
The President and the unscrupulous mafia around him have transformed Dharmapuri into a land of pimps and whores. Vijayan seems to emphasize that progress is impossible in Dharmapuri under a debased President. His heartless atrocities and callous and criminal indifference to the problems of the people have made a veritable hell of his land. Vijayan proceeds to unfold the insanity that shapes the politics of Dharmapuri by showing the brutal arrogance of dictatorship that seeks satisfaction through sadism and eroticism.

*The Saga* embodies the victory of the oriental culture over the mechanized world. Siddhaartha motif is introduced as the last straw of salvation. He remains the sole spiritual solution for the cankered and destroyed contemporary human psyche. The modern world is shown as doomed to a pathetic, decadent state of affairs; where man’s relationship to man is interpreted in terms of the ruler and the subject, the colonizer and the colonized. The metaphysical quest that runs like a thread of gold through out *The Saga* is moulded by the oriental philosophy. The novel embodies the victory of oriental culture over the mechanized western world. Vijayan reiterates the futility of war and the repeated failure of revolutions of the conventional variety.

A sarcastic quality pervades the entire work. It is the stinging satiric tone that Vijayan employs to unleash an assault on the
decaying concept of power politics. The novel subverts all conventional notions of literary creation. Subversive aesthetics is seen projected both in theme and form in *The Saga*. Black humour is combined with unrestricted forays into scatology and eroticism in which antics of the governing class and the servile responses of the people are etched out, to form the framework of a corrupt society.

*The Saga* assumes the dimension of an anti-Utopian fantasy. The novel represents a lethal variant of tyranny and oppression through popular consent. Vijayan draws a stinking picture of the degeneration of Indian democratic system through innovative fictional strategies. He also depicts a thinly disguised allegory of the post-Independence political situation in India. The modes of fictionalization adopted by Vijayan are absolutely unconventional and outrageous which jolts the readers out of their complacency.

Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* is remarkable for its technical innovativeness and biting satire on the post–Emergency Indian political situation. The novel is a curious vision of the contemporary India narrated in the framework of the epic *Mahabharata*. Historiographic re-construction is an effective stratagem to demythify the metanarratives of history. Myth is a belief or symbol expressed in dramatic narrative form that lives in the psyche and culture of a country, often because it is invested
with emotional intensity and fulfils the important societal need of binding a populace together. The age old saga of Kauravas and the Pandavas provided the basic tapestry over which is superimposed a narrative of the national life. This complete deconstruction of the much venerated epic is made agreeable as well as palatable by the judicious variations in stylistic levels and tones.

The narrative style adopted by the author is reminiscential of the traditional method of Indian story telling. The epic framework assured the author of general acceptability and a liveliness of interest among his readers. The conversation between the narrator-Vyasa and the scribe-Ganapathi reveals the strategy employed in the construction of the novel. The multiple narrative strands of the novel are meticulously manipulated to create a fascinating dialectic between history and life. The mythical past is neither redeemed nor annihilated but subjected to re-interpreting, revising and re-appropriating as a concept for articulating the cultural codes. The entire text could be viewed as an endeavour to place the legendary past side by side with the present by way of the twin narrative, distorting and demythifying the great epic.

The narrative designs of The Great Indian Novel enable an identification of the reader with the individual experience of living through history. The events of the novel get unfolded through the memory of the narrator who does his job in a very detached
manner. Fiction is interpolated between the historical events and the reader, effecting a displacement of the master narrative of history into a secondary level of the text. Tharoor is trying to rewrite the past in terms of the present. He re-presents and re-creates the contemporary Indian history by adopting the mythic framework of the epic. Consequently it becomes accessible only through the mediation of the primary fictional level. This valorization of the fictional over the historical is the most celebrated postcolonial device of demythification. Tharoor dismantles and demythifies the very *Mahabharata* myth and subjects it to extreme satirical treatment. He makes the mythic character wear the garb of the politicians of contemporary India. The technique he employs is the unconventional Indian style of interpreting the present in terms of the mythical past and containing the historical with the metaphysical by dismantling the temporal with events perceived in a cyclical rather than linear frame.

Tharoor devises new paradigms of fictionalization to contain the degenerated state of the post-Independence India. The demystification package is brimming with heavy doses of fantasy, parody, metafiction, satire, humour and paradox. *The Great Indian Novel* is a historiographic metafiction in the sense that it problematizes the modern Indian History. The novel combines all
features of metafiction viz. intertextuality, self-reflexivity open-endedness, irony, provisionality and so on. An extreme satiric vein runs through the entire text. The narrator uses a satiric and irreverent tone while referring to the great masters of history. The periodic and subversive element becomes apparent when Ganga Dutta states about his great vow:

What is essential is to remain true to one’s principles. My vow has never been so sorely tested, but I’m sorry, Mother, I won’t give in to untruth for any reason.’ (He tried not to sound pompous while saying this, and nearly succeeded). (TGIN 31)

Tharoor effects the subversion of the ancient epic for portraying the deterioration of values and idealism in Indian society. Tharoor intents to give a re-definition of the Indian reality by exploring into the past and also by re-creating the present through innovative fictional methods. He employs unconventional techniques to depict the present decadence in the Indian society. The novelist manipulated fresh demystifying strategies to portray the bleak side of our democratic system dominated by corrupt, authoritarian and decadent predilections. Reality is present in its mutation and each fragmented part is invested with hyperbolic dimensions. The immediacy of experience of reality is conveyed to the reader by a medley of devices and an ironic and satiric mode
of narration. Tharoor uses a language in which diverse forms of illustrations and stylizations unite and merge. Conversations are employed in plenty to resist the monologic voice of the narrator or the author. Tharoor adopts new paradigms of demystification to express a subversive theme which reveals the exploitative power structures of contemporary India.

Realizing the role they play as individuals in the nation’s life and their commitments to self-assertion and self-expression, the writers of post-Independence India highlighted the nexus of socio-political and historic aspect of the country, individual freedom and quest for truth. This new crop of writers differ only in fictional techniques and methods adopted with a view to changing the paradigms of perceptions. They perfected new aesthetics while dealing with political themes. Their strategies marked a complete deviation from the realistic mode of writing. Their vigour and vitality of expression revived the Indian literary scenario, setting a new trend in contemporary Indian English fiction.

Salman Rushdie, O. V. Vijayan and Shashi Tharoor belong to the same plane of artistic temperament in their perception of the post-Independence political situation in India. Hence the literary creations of these writers share stylistic peculiarities as well. Their enticing style does not merely allow history to be an impassive back drop to the fictional universe, but it also seeks to reflect the
broad sweep of historical change over generations. They politicize fiction or rather fictionalize politics through new tactics of demystification. The treatment of history by these novelists conjoined with unique narrative modes; weaves delicate connections between different phenomena to the effect that every event becomes invariably related with every other event. This generates a mobility with which history as an unending dialogue traverses past and present giving rise to a fluid pattern of time. Their fictional fabric accommodates fact and fiction aesthetically. By integrating the protagonists with the political process and by subjecting political platitude and developments to a thorough scrutiny from a human angle, these novelists reflect a perceptive consciousness of the unprecedented relevance for the individual of the way the political wind blows.

The Emergency that marked the culmination of the relentless craze for power exhibited by a semi-fascist regime casts its petrifying shadows in the works of Rushdie, Vijayan and Tharoor. They are deeply concerned with the contemporary problems of exploitative power structures; communal strife, loss of faith in human values, and hatred engendered by inequality in the capitalist system. This sensitized their imaginative minds and stimulated them to devise new fictional strategies.
It has been an enlightening experience to pursue the creative impulses of Rushdie, Vijayan and Tharoor and to evaluate new strategies of demystification employed by them for the fictional transmutation of political consciousness. Rushdie, Vijayan and Tharoor have tried to perfect a fresh poetics of demystification in their major fictional works. Subversive aesthetics is seen projected both in theme and form. The felicity of expression is reflected in the cyclical structure of their novels where ideas emerge, recede and re-emerge in transmuted forms like thought waves.

This study attempts to identify the turbulent unconventionality in the political imagination of these three writers. They resorted to unprecedented fictional techniques and varied narrative patterns and have demolished old fictive traditions to establish new prototypes. These novelists are prolific creative writers and their works provide scope for further literary research which could be in the form of an exploration into the intricacies of political fiction and also an indepth structural and stylistic reading of their novels.