CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to provide a survey of the concept of Magical Realism briefly. Perhaps Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's children*, Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*, and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* will help to promote, a more meaningful visualization and understanding of the concept. Some of the basic points of this thesis are as follows:

Magic Realism is a widely discussed theme. There are several critical works with scholarly and intellectual hand along with very profound and philosophical analytic studies that produced many sources for consultation. Going back to the duality of the two word that make up the term: "Realism" affirms the reality of being, of things and of ideas; that is to say, the world is as we see it, but we must make an effort in order to really see it. As a matter of fact it is a very complex term. "Magical" signifies the magical power which is possessed by a person with ideas and things. The term also denotes that it is supernatural and hidden which is exists within them and attracts all that is marvelous and surprising that is encountered in the present world. Because of myriad and such varied information, diverse anonymous opinions, it is quite difficult to reach to unanimous conclusion about the concept.

Roh was correct when he said that this term, Magical Realism, covered all the aspects needed to classify that style of paintings, and so resolved the problem that other terms presented, were partial and incomplete and to all the 'new/old' phenomenon 'artistic-literary'. It is
'new/old' because it is like the discovery of the so-called "new world"
the new part is only the new eyes that contemplate it.

The present study takes up the basic theme of the writer’s search
for the mysterious and then deals with the sub-themes such as (1)
History, Fantasy (2) Myth and reality (3) Irony and Parody (4)
Symbolism and allegory in the context of magic realism. All these three
novelists reflect these themes in all their novels - Salman Rushdie's
'Midnight's children', Amitav Ghosh's 'The Shadow Lines', and Shashi
Tharoor’s 'The Great Indian Novel'.

Midnight's Children is a unique novel in the sense that
unexpected and overwhelming changes in Western attitude towards
India and Indian literature became manifest by the sensational
publication of Rushdie’s Midnight's children in 1981. In the words of
Claus Borner:

It was something like a Copernican turning point in the history
of literature and idea.1

There can be no denying that the world wide acclaim of
Midnight's Children is very rare and even more sensational
phenomenon. The grandiose and unanimous reception of Midnight's
children in Europe and in the U.S. is well known.

With the publication of Midnight's Children it was clear that a
rare thing had happened; we had suddenly seen the emergence
of a major writer. That book’s extraordinary scale and fertility,
its span of styles from free buoyant fantasy to murderous social
invective experiment and political courage, its power of
illuminating the English language with the metaphors, myths
and sheer locality of Indian writing made it a remarkable
intervention.2

Chapter V: Conclusion
The main thrust of the present study is on the link between the destiny of an individual and the country that won the freedom simultaneously. In Rushdie's phraseology the protagonist of the novel Saleem Sinai is 'handcuffed to history'. He is the significant character in Rushdie's Midnight’s children, who is an individual being born on the same date and time as the birth of Free India. Rushdie creates a fictional world which is highly symbolic of historical reality. The central theme of Rushdie is not social criticism but the presentation of certain phases of history in the course of which the world and human nature have undergone radical and irrevocable changes. Rushdie's Principle use of magic realism in the 'Midnight's Children' 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 fantastic is easily discerned in 'Midnight's Children'. Through it, the realistic makes its voice heard. The thousand and one children point, not only towards the fantasy of the similarly numbered Arabian Nights, but also to Rushdie's Calculations of the Indian birth rate. Furthermore, Rushdie's comment enables the gift of telepathy to be perceived as a magical signifier of the objective reality of contemporary Indian reality. The Washing Chest, Accident and the Circus Ring. Accident are other instances of magic Realism.

Rushdie revels in blurring the distinction between history and fiction. History and fiction are both identified as narrative discourses and linguistic constructs. Both forms of narrative are signifying systems in the culture. This self-reflexive mode of novel, which incorporates
history in fiction rejects projecting present beliefs and standard into the past and asserts the specificity and particularity of the individual past events, which the historian transmutes into facts; it is conceptualized that the past once existed, but that our historical knowledge of it is semantically transmitted. Postmodern fiction suggests that to rewrite and to present the past in the fiction and history is to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive. It aims to offer alternate reality / history and asserts that there is never one truth. Through this new fictional mode, the author examines how private lives intersect in public realms, and how individuals fit into history. In *Midnight's Children*, Saleem's personal history is paralleled with national history. The novel starts in 1915, thirty two years before the birth of Saleem, and ends when he is about to be thirty one. It spans about sixty three years, with Saleem's and India's birth at the center.

*Midnight's Children* is drawn on the models of the seemingly endless and digressive Indian epics, the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. The text also invokes Scherzade's plight at the hands of King Shahryar in *The Thousand and one Night's* whom she must keep continuously entertained by her stories if she is to save her own life. Saleem too, compelled by the demands of Padma and circumstances, is forced to preserve his very existence through the continuation of his narrative. The novel illustrates a link between Rushdie's chosen style of communication in the text and the forms of oral narrative that he seeks to reproduce.

Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* basically depends on one single move in which the classical mythological text of the 'Mahabharata' is displaced and superimposed as a pretext upon a

*Chapter V: Conclusion*
historical narrative that reaches from the inception of the Indian freedom struggle to the end of Indira Gandhi’s emergency. As historical fiction Tharoor’s book, thus roughly covers the same terrain as 'Midnight's Children': the period from the emergence of Indian nationalism through the struggle for independence and its achievement, to the corruption of the nation - state that India has become. By way of telling Indian history and mythology becomes at one level, legible as fundamentally different: not as a derivation of the modular form of European prime modernity but, in an impolitic version of the paradigm of the national as a rerun, or rather re-enactment, of the events codified in Mahabharata.

Tharoor employs the mythical plot of The Mahabharata as a structuring frame. However, he alters the mythological essence of the epic by representing historical personages from Indian history with human attributes. Moreover in place of divine births and other supernatural events in the epic, Tharoor introduces the possibility of human action. Tharoor permits Ved Vyas / V.V. to write the history which contains his own alternative version of history in 'The Great Indian Novel' "... he listened to me quietly when I told him that his task would be no less than transcribing the son of modern India in my prose...". The self conscious narrative technique reflects upon the lapses in both the narratives of historical discourse as well as fictional discourse. Tharoor informs the reader,

"...What is left out matters as much as what is said...".

Throor attempts to reveal the power of fiction in reinventing history and the power of history in representing itself as a discursive act.
Tharoor plays upon the traditional narrative to reveal the manipulative tactics of power in order to contain resistance within class conflict. Drona's power over Eklavya is built over resistance,

*Had the poor boy been less of a literalist and gladly stuck out his thumb as a gesture of devotion and subservience, would Drona have hacked it off with a knife of laughingly invented the lad to join his class?*  

Rushdie through his mutilation of Saleem by his geography teacher, Emil Zagallo reveals how power is manipulated to engineer students in the institution of the school.

Rushdie, Tharoor and Ghosh do not devalue history; instead they reveal how history is a text which constantly circulates among other texts. The Emergency and the partition are two events upon which Rushdie and Tharoor heavily reveal their understanding of power relations within the nation state. There is an element of satire as they reconstruct within the fictional format the power relations that enabled the power of authority to render individuals under the democratic regime into subjects.

The three texts interpret individuals not in terms of an inner essence, but as submitting to relationships of force even voluntarily. It is the malleability of individuals which subjects them to processes of subjectivities. But the notions of power even when applied to relations acquire a recognizable form only with the encounter of the twin polarities of power and subversion. Rushdie, Ghosh and Tharoor interpret subjects as discursive constructions and as products of power. The three texts reveal how power operates behind the regimes of truth.

*Chapter V: Conclusion*
It is in being politically conscious of the power / knowledge paradigm, that Tharoor refuses to offer any definite alternative to the leakage in history or fiction, as when he advises, "derive your standards from the world around you and not from a heritage whose relevance would be constantly tested". Tharoor's open - ended narrative reopens the narratives of fiction and history as Tharoor / V.V. affirms the endless quest for meaning. "... the essence of the tale lay in the telling...".

Tharoor's alternative version of modern Indian History in 'The Great Indian Novel' is bracketed between the event at Gandhi's entry into Indian politics and the restoration of Mrs. Gandhi after the fall of the Janata Government. Tharoor allows Nehru/Dhritarashtra and Mrs. Gandhi/Duryodhani to dominate the fictional narrative to reflect his knowledge of their power of domination in the political sphere. Rushdie, Ghosh and Tharoor focus on the complexity of the struggle for freedom. They examine major events that accompanied Indian independence especially the disillusionment generated by the partition, the emergency and the power of the nation state over the collective imagination.

In 'The Great Indian Novel', Tharoor interweaves Indian history and the ancient Hindu epic to reassert cultural identity and to present an indigenous perspective of modern Indian history. Unlike the Western Writer, Tharoor sees history and myth alike in their process of structure and function. In both history and myth as discourses, Tharoor recognizes the power / knowledge paradigm. His ingenuity lies in revealing how the methodology of the ancient epic can replay the political system of modern India. This implicates that the process of
history - making and that of fiction making are structurally and functionally at play.

Tharoor shares in common with the perception that narratives can invariably be rewritten. Tharoor rewrites the traditional narrative of the Mahabharata and of modern Indian history in a postmodern perspective. In the adoption of such a perspective Tharoor reveals the power of religious concept to secularize not only Indian legends but also Indian political history which is set against the political concept. The Great Indian Novel subverts the "modern myths" of Indian independence and the narratives of democracy. Tharoor sees in variant narratives (The Mahabharata and the Western notion of Indian independence) multiple interpretations of reality.

Tharoor in combing the power of creativity with the scholarship of factual information vests the objectivity of factual history with a potential for fictional probability. The Great Indian Novel closely projects the struggle for independence as a struggle for power. Tharoor in rewriting the western and the nationalist record of modern Indian history questions the possibility of history as a monolith. However, in employing an indigenous perspective, Tharoor does not privilege the categorization of the dominant and the dominated. Rather Tharoor sees history as another discourse where, "Stories never end, they just continue somewhere else..." ⁹

Amitav Ghosh 'The Shadow Lines' is a story that pervades through the seams of reality and fiction, of time and space, of memories and beliefs. Ghosh's work is known to be imbued with intricate details of the given time and situation, which he writes about and his words are filled
with a wealth of meaning. Having penned several novels, Ghosh seems to reinvent himself with his every work but *The Shadow Lines* undoubtedly remains one of his best.

*The Shadow Lines* is story told by a nameless narrator in recollection. It’s a non-linear tale told as if putting together the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle in the memory of the narrator. This style of writing is both unique and captivating; unfolding ideas together as time and space coalesce and help the narrator to understand his past better. This piece of writing is revolving around the theme of nationalism in an increasingly globalized world. Ghosh questions the real meaning of political freedom and the borders which virtually seem to both establish and separate. The novel traverses through almost seventy years through the memories of people. Which narrator recollects and narrates, giving the viewpoints of characters. Though the novel is based largely in Kolkata, Dhaka and London, it seems to echo the sentiments of whole south-east Asia, with lucid overtones of Independence and the pangs of partition.

When the readers read *The Shadow Lines* they are pressurized by the narrative tone and stance judicious, reflective, intelligent and sensitive - to accept the narrator's account and his interpretation of men, women and events as the definitive versions of reality. This is a novel that comes to us entirely filtered through a singular consciousness. There is no irony or different points of view. The narrator sees through Tridib’s eyes, studies history like Tridib does, thinks Tridib's thoughts and finally loves Tridib's lover. However, his growing imagination, empathy and intellectuality allow for the exploration and understanding of complex themes. As his horizons expand and become international in scope, his questions, memories and experiences provide the structure of

Chapter V: Conclusion
the narrative. However, in many stories of the novel - *The Shadow Lines* becomes not just an authorized autobiography but the biography of a nation.

Thought written in difference styles, the three novels, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Ghosh's - *The shadow Lines* and Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*, shares the novelist's vision of life. All The three novels are historical journeys. The novels end with many questions regarding history, memory identity, truth, culture and civilization. That appears to be the magic of *Magic Realism*, which is the common bond amongst these writers.