CONCLUSION

The purpose of carrying out the research on the notion of Indianness in CIWE has been to first point to a problem of ‘Indianness, and then make an attempt to discuss ‘Indianness’ as a representational mode. Subsequently, a discussion of the notion of ‘Indianness’ as a problem as well as a source for the Indian authors, helped in considering the literary culmination of the notion of Indianness in IWE in its two hundred years of literary history. However, an awareness of the representation of India’s cultural history has been consciously being used by the authors of IWE which can be called Indianness. As Emma Dawson Varughese has written in her most recent book, it is very useful to understand how the motifs of ‘Indianness’ were developed by the Indian authors since independence as well as by those who knew India well through constant travel and long term visits to the country (5).

Thus, by referring to Indianness, the dynamics behind the term ‘Indian’, and how it has been located in the cultural history of India have been explored in this thesis. Since it is a broad term and can be seen against the background of various relevant considerations of histories and cultures, it becomes almost mandatory that one refers to the sources that explain of the term ‘India’ for present contexts of discussion. Thus, the main purpose throughout the thesis has been to identify the various sources of the notion of ‘Indianness’, traceable mainly in the Indian mythical and other narrative traditions which have in turn noticeably influenced the writings of the authors of CIWE, and have shaped their experiences about India.

A serious discussion of the various aspects of the idea of ‘India’, and ‘Indianness’, can be traced back in nearly two hundred years of scholarly renderings over sources, histories, influences, formal aspects, narrative traditions and so on. But the generic formation of the Indian English canon and the
evaluation of its aesthetic values, find themselves entangled with the nativistic articulation of identity. The expatriate Indian English authors, whose main literary language is English, find themselves in a privileged position to deal with such a situation. Although, the Western critical theories have rendered powerful influences by providing methods to analyse a text written by an Indian author, the tendency to explore the inner sources of criticism in India has resulted in a renewed concern over Nativism around 1970s and 80s. Following this, 'Indianness' in the discussion of the Nativist critics like Bhalchandra Nemade and G. N. Devy thus denotes a search for roots in the Indian narrative tradition that establishes connections with India's cultural past. This is important, as such an examination helps in rejecting the views of discontinued traditions propounded mainly by the Orientalist histories of India and Indian culture.

However, one should also recognize the religious and linguistic diversity within India by acknowledging the contributions of even the non-Hindu traditions to India's rich cultural heritage. Besides, no discussion of Nativism can be apolitical. On the one hand, the ideas of India and 'Indianness' had almost been hijacked by the religious Hindu jingoists following the rise of BJP in the Indian political scenario; on the other, one is fast moving towards a consumerist market society whose interpretations of political 'freedom' does not connote ideas of autonomy. K. Satchidanandan in his essay "Indian Literature: Nativism and Its Ambivalence" states that any discussion of Nativism in this context will have to be conducted against political separatism, because it may degenerate into a form of rustic revivalism and an unconditional valorization of the feudal values. Thus, the Nativistic task of deconstructing the Indian narrative tradition must also be a part of the greater project of constructing unity at a higher and more realistic conceptual level, of the plurality within the nation, and of interconnectivity within the cultures (29-30).

With such available critical baggage in mind, this thesis has sought to find out how the novels of Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh provide a thread on the
different notions of Indianness which are both political as well as cultural. It seems that Rushdie has subscribed to the idea of India as a metaphorical construct, while Ghosh, with his minute observation of the particularities of Indian life and history, has tried to define India in some concrete terms. By providing an alternative reading of Post-colonialism itself, they are perhaps trying to articulate the paradoxical discourse on marginality in Post-colonialism which can be seen as yet another major intellectual rendering in CIWE. However, one also needs to seriously consider the fact that the notion of Indianness in the novels of Rushdie and Ghosh is to be discussed in terms of specific representative periods, traditions, languages, and literary cultures. This has been obvious in the ways they have presented their own changing views on India and Indianness at various phases of their intellectual life. Besides, both the authors seem to have addressed not only their spatial dislocation from India but also the socio-cultural displacements following such dislocations. Consequently, their concern is 'global' and not simply 'Indian' as their main experience centers on the modern world of immigrants, refugees and all sorts of exiles spread across the world.

Several attempts have gone into analyzing the narrative strategies or the representational modes adopted by the Indian English authors which underwrite the politics of cultural representation in the arena of CIWE. Critics like Partha Chatterjee and Dipesh Ckakrabarty tend to argue that in the processes of British Imperialism, the making of the Indian national narrative from within India are shifted, appropriated, and redeployed in the forms of new experiences of the emerging nation. But the 'historical' and 'cultural' is not to be deemed as a matter of false consciousness. Instead, it is an active power of shifting and re-ordering events from the vast array of traditional source materials. In CIWE, the authors are often seen to engage themselves in asserting their Indianness by intertextually referring to the historical and cultural traditions of India. Such a
shifting and reordering of events from India's traditional source materials become very relevant to the discussion of a literary text within CIWE.

As discussed in the thesis, the first reference to the idea of India can perhaps be traced in the Vedas and the Hindu epics. But the first reference to the term 'India' as a definable entity is to be traced in the narratives of the Muslim travelers to India. As Sanskrit was a major pan-Indian language till the 11th century, the two Indian epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* were constantly being appropriated to newer contexts in subsequent times. Even after the advent of the Urdu language, the unifying ethos in literature remained Hindu with Sanskrit as its source language. An Indian writer, while producing a literary work, should never ignore the fact that he derives the symbols, images, and references from the same stock of cultural forms unified through the processes of assimilation in Indian political history. But a major rift with such a tradition was caused by European influences which divided the consciousness of the Indians, and the fictional representation in the works of the Indian authors too became divided between a liking for tradition and the modern world of specification, alienation, and separation.

Against such a background, the study of Indianness both as a source and a problem should be considered significant. Also important is the exploration of what constitutes the main research agendas of Rushdie and Ghosh as authors. In India where certain class and caste identities are taken to be representative of some essential Indianness, those excluded from such identities risk marginalization and victimization. A study of the novels of Rushdie and Ghosh are useful in this context. Because the experience of marginality is explicit in the fictional works of both the authors who find it quite difficult to conform to the contemporary definition of what this marginality should be. Also important is their discussion of the 'constructed' nature of facts, reality, ideas, histories, and traditions. It is observed that unlike the first generation Indian English authors thriving for a kind of international exposure, authors of CIWE often replace that
exposure with the idea of travel, dislocation, mass movement and settlement, and the problem of ‘us’ and ‘them’. It is in this context, that the debate on the notion of Indianness in authors like Rushdie and Ghosh is to be most productively conducted.

While theoretical tools like deconstruction has provided the methods for analyzing a text in the present times, the various shifts and trajectories in Cultural Studies since 1970s, that registered itself as a discipline under the auspices of Stuart Hall, were also to influence the Indian intellectuals of the 1990s and afterward. Posing a challenge to the old centers and discourses of humanities, they privileged storytelling and popular culture both as a source of value and as an area of study. This provides a valid background to study the writers’ adoption of storytelling as a technique of literary exploration in India. According to Amit Choudhuri, the British Cultural Studies of the 1970s was almost repeated in India during 1990. But by 2005, it was almost difficult to ask where it was going. As he further states, Indian Cultural Studies became a rewriting and extension of British and American Cultural Studies by defining itself in terms of its relationship to Western humanities through specific lens and angle. Following this Indianness, postcoloniality, and popular culture were conflated into a single entity recuperated against the humanist assumptions of Western liberal arts (15). But the important point he raised is that Indian Cultural Studies’ emphasis on conflating postcoloniality with popular culture also meant that it effectively refused to recognize, engage with, and most importantly, explore the formative history of tension with its own ‘high’ cultural space (15).

Rushdie and Ghosh are no critic or theorist. But both as authors resort to a discussion of how historical forces mould characters and events. It seems from the substantially large number of critical discussions that Rushdie has been particularly attractive to postcolonial critics who often take cultural hybridity as an important and necessary given. In terms of ideas, however, I find close resemblance among Rushdie, Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. Rushdie shares
ideas with Said when the later opines that the whole notion of crossing over or moving from one identity to another is extremely important for hybridity. On the other hand, Bhabha in his essay “Dissemination: Time, Narration and the Margins of the Modern Nation” projects culture as a hybrid form. He elaborates culture, its members and its sign, all in terms of the tensions of differences followed by the meeting of past and present which he calls ‘Disjunctive temporality’. This is analogous to Rushdie’s ‘Broken Mirrors’ about the migrant (11). Rushdie generalizes the excitement of the homeless like this: “But human beings do not perceive things whole. We are not...wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable of fractured perceptions” (12).

Ghosh too shares some similarities with Bhabha with what the later seeks to argue in his *The Locations of Culture* that the psychic relation between the colonizer and the colonized has the potential to prevent the formation of any stable unchanging identities. Following Bhabha’s ideas of resistance being the result of the ambivalent relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, the aesthetics of resistance, deconstruction of national historiography, reconstruction of the past following Nativistic tendencies, and most importantly, articulation of identities become, in case of Ghosh, the guiding forces in his novels. After reading his novels, it becomes clear that Ghosh took British colonialism, colonised Indians and the postcolonial India as his chosen areas of investigation. While supporting the idea of travel, which is an unavoidable condition in the life of a modern human being, Ghosh presumes that it gives him a chance to nostalgically consider India as his home. However, like Edward Said, he draws attention to the East-West binaries implicit in the ideas of Orientalism; like Homi Bhabha he demonstrates the hybrid interstitial nature of cultures; and like the Subaltern Studies scholars, he endeavours to make the silenced voices speak.

Experiment is explicit in all of Rushdie’s novels as he has tried to accomplish something new in each new novel. But, the adoption of storytelling as his narrative technique invites critical considerations. Magic Realism is the
other form that is constantly being used by Rushdie. But why does he resort to the epic style of representation is answered very beautifully by Peter Morey in his essay “Salman Rushdie and the English Tradition” (Gunrah The Cambridge Companion 29-43). It is pertinent to note that against F. R. Leavis’s “Great Tradition”, Rushdie seems to have developed his own tradition by upholding the significance of Swift, Fielding, Sterne, Blake, and Lewis Carol. He adopted the experimental and flamboyant qualities of these writers which also characterize his own fictional works. Such a lineage may provide some outlets for exploring the epical and the fantastical in his novels. Morey also states that for a writer like Rushdie, roots are a conservative myth designed to keep one in one’s places, and his writings consciously celebrate the fraught delights of journeys and migrations. Subsequently, Rushdie finds his literary inspiration, as he tells in Imaginary Homelands, not in the Leavisite “Great Traditions” but in Gogol, Cervantes, Kafka, Melville, Machado de Assis, against whom he measures himself and to whom he would be bound to belong.

Experiment in the Rushdian sense is not the same in case of Amitav Ghosh. In the context of the ambivalence between diasporic existence and national allegiance, Ghosh’s novels adapt themselves to the form of the quest narratives which are at once fictional, historical, and journalistic. As a successor of Rushdie, Ghosh serves an important purpose of writing about ‘home’ rather than the ‘West’. Despite the influences of European narrative fiction, Ghosh’s quest narratives are ways to deal not only with the absence of roots but also the lack of an adequate language to uphold a sense of cultural belonging. What remains in this crucial juncture is the ‘subtexts’ on which Ghosh seems to have given the greatest emphasis. Based on the blurring of the divisions between the fictional and the factual, Rushdie’s fictional works are well-researched with a meticulous attention to details and careful documentation. However, the research Ghosh has undertaken in his novels are done only in connection with the specifics—weaving and phrenology in TCR, mediaeval mercantile trade in IAAL.
cyber technology in \textit{TCC}, cetology in \textit{THT}, colonialism in \textit{TGP}, opium trade in \textit{TSP} and so on. This aspect of his writing relates to his refusal in 2001 to accept the Commonwealth Writer’s Prize, when he was selected for the prize for his novel \textit{The Glass Palace}. Ghosh opined that his rejection was based on his objection to the memory of the Empire implicit in the term Commonwealth. Another reason he cited was that the prize excludes the many languages that sustain the cultural and literary lives of these countries. Such a step taken by Ghosh clearly exemplifies his stand as a writer whose strong allegiances to India as a country is quite explicit in his views about India, its people and culture.

A number of attempts have been made in CIWE to trace its origin in the secular ideas that prevail in India. Both writers and scholars alike seek to address CIWE in terms of secularism which is also because they implicitly or explicitly endorse the Nehruvian notions of a secular nation that might work as an antidote to the current problems of pluralist politics. Both Rushdie and Ghosh take Indira Gandhi’s National Emergency (1975-77) as an important event that destroyed Nehru’s vision of a secular India. Subsequently, a host of other authors like Shashi Tharoor and Amit Choudhuri often sought to find out what does ‘being Indian’ actually mean in today’s context of political turmoil. This also indirectly means that one feels far more comfortable defining oneself in the context of the secular—a notion, the Indian constitution has helped to realize. Thus, the novels like Rushdie’s \textit{MC} and Ghosh’s \textit{TSL}, that try to narrate the story of post independence India, can be seen as specific responses to the political situation of their time. These novels mark out an important period in the Indian political history—the breakdown of the Nehruvian secular consensus that began with Indira Gandhi’s imposition of the National Emergency (1975–7) and the subsequent rise of an alternative national ideology called Hindutva, based on the supremacy of Hindu religion and culture. Hence, the novels of both the authors allegorise the idea of an Indian nation by incorporating into the fictional space
different versions of the national past: in the sense that they present different patterns of specific historical events in India’s colonial and postcolonial history.

The final assertion in the thesis is that Indian English literature has its origin in a universal Indian temper, and to gain access to the notion of Indianness in such a field of writing, one must be clear about the consequences of the debates between the socio-historical outcome of decolonization and the consequent need for affirming one’s identity. A careful exploration of the English language to narrate the Indian experience and an examination of the synthesis between East and West, from which Indian English Literature had actually emerged, might help in the analysis of Indianness as a necessary tool for exploring the ethos of CIWE. The study of the novels of Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh has been one of immense importance in this context. A pertinent question still remains: whether the authors’ drawing on Indian material is more than a nostalgic gloating, which itself seems to have become a postmodernist fad. But it should be assumed that the writers’ borrowing from local, indigenous material for the sake of ‘authenticity’ is often overshadowed by an implied search for roots. However, both engage themselves with the exploration of the forms of collective lives while writing the stories about India as a nation. Thus, the figure of a historian appears so prominently in many of their fictional works.

Authors like Rushdie and Ghosh, have almost gained the status of celebrity mainly because of their postcolonial ‘juggling’ of literary forms and genres. It is also because, all contemporary discourses on India only stress the diversity and differences within India, and naturally, Rushdie and Ghosh have ignored a kind of cultural essentialism which is also the basis of grand narratives that accommodates diverse cultural significations. That is why perhaps, Rushdie’s ‘chutnification’ and Ghosh’s ‘weaving’ turn out to be significant strategies in their fictional narratives about India. Hype created by Western media and publishers, the observations of critics on the representation of India by immigrant writers, the supposed advantages of the Non Resident Indians, the
Indian intellectuals joining hands with the Westerners, the recent fad around the use of deconstructive mode of writing—all these have rejected the views of India being based on essentialism. Ghosh is markedly different from Rushdie in many aspects one major aspect being his critique of that very essentialism to a noticeable extent. Thus, the fictional works of Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh become part of their attempt at narrativising experiential reality, suggesting at the same time that Indianness is a ‘continuum’ and ‘India’ is an ‘imagined community’.

Works Cited:


