Chapter I
India and Political History: A Representation

Indian fiction dates back to the British presence in India, Rajmohan’s Wife (1864) by B. C. Chaterjee being the first novel in English by an Indian writer. One major reason for the rise of the novel in India was the British presence as the colonizer here who used fiction as a device to project India to the West. The Indian writers on their part tried to counter the ‘White Man’s burden’ of the colonial writers.

Since then, Indian fiction has grown in stature and variety. Today the genre of fiction in India boasts of several big names like Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Arun Joshi, Kamala Markandaya, etc. Critics often divide Indian fictional genre into various sub categories like Indian English Fiction and Regional Fiction, Pre-independence Fiction and Post-independence Fiction, etc. However, one of the most dominant concerns of the Indian fictional genre as a whole has been politics.

However, what exactly is a political novel and how can one define it? It appears that a standard definition eludes it. Carlo Coppola says: “...political novel has not been dealt in any definite way...its proper subject matter, its scope, its form—remains open to question” (1). It could be one that deals with a particular ideology. There are fictions that project a particular political ideology and through that hit out at the prevailing social reality. Secondly, there are works where politics acts as merely a background against which the characters act. A novel in this form usually reflects the social reality in a particular social situation. Both can be referred to as Political Novels.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as “a fictitious political narrative, a novel about imaginary politicians”. One possible definition is by Morris E. Speare who defines a political novel as, “a work of fiction which leans rather to ‘ideas’ than to ‘emotions’...where the main purpose of the writer is party propaganda, public reform, or exposition of the lives of personages who maintain Government or of forces which constitute government” (Qtd. in Naik, “The Political Novel in Indian Writing in English” 6). The definition throws some light on the nature of a Political Novel. It is one that reflects ‘ideas’. These ‘ideas’ can pertain to a particular ideology like Marxist, Communist or Capitalist or more broadly it can reflect the political situation
prevalent and its implications for society and literature. H.A.L. Fisher defines it as a narrative which, "...concerns itself with men and women engaged in contemporary political life and discussing contemporary political ideas" (qtd in Bhatnagar O. P. 5).

The Indian Fiction does not end with the departure of the British; rather it has continued to flourish, extending its scope and variety. Indian fiction, then, was divided into Pre-independence fiction and Post-independence fiction. The former largely referring to works of literature written prior to independence and dealing with the Independence Struggle. It focuses on freedom from the British rule and can be further divided into two sub-categories: First are Gandhian novels, emphasizing on a non-violent and peaceful movement to drive the British away while the second emphasizes on driving the British out by all and any means, violent if need be. As Carlo Coppola says in "Politics and the Novel in India: A Perspective", "Pre-independence novels...fall into two broad categories which both concern one basic theme: Indian aspirations for freedom and independence from Britain...Those favorable towards a non-violent, more or less peaceful expulsion...comprised one group. There outlook could be characterized as Gandhian...The second group advocated the expulsion of the British by any means whatsoever, usually violent in nature" (2).

The post-independence fiction deals with the times after the British regime was over and an independent India continued with its social and political commitments. This phase of the Political novel can again be divided into two sub-categories. First, the ones believing in the ending of the era of villainy and evil while the second holding that with independence only the batons changed and now the oppressors, instead of the Whites, are the brown babus. To quote Coppola once again, "Post-independence literature...On the one hand freedom had been won;...exploiter had been expelled and the forces of evil were no longer in the land. But on the other hand, writers and intellectuals generally felt that the only change effected by independence was the change in the color of the exploiters' skin" (3).

One significant aspect that finds expression in the Indian fiction of both these eras is politics. In fact, it has continued to occupy a central position and dominant space in Indian Fiction right from the very beginning. What does a political novel then reflect in Indian fiction? As elsewhere, here in India too, a political novel is defined by its
theme and content rather than its form. The political consciousness in the Indian Fiction is reflected in the works of authors like Bhabani Bhattacharaya, Manohar Malgaonkar and Nayantara Sehgal. The Political Fiction in Indian literature is replete with discussions of the times and the prevalent political structures then. The writers have carefully woven the historical dates and time with their characters in their work of art. M. K. Bhatnagar opines: “In history nothing is true but names and dates, in literature everything is true but names and dates” (33). The Indian Fiction with political overtones constructed the political reality of the times vividly, blurring at times the distinction between reality and art.

The earliest attempts at political overtones can be seen as far back as 1835 when K. C. Dutt wrote *A Journal of Forty Eight Hours*. However, the real flowering occurred in the 1920s with the Gandhian cry for independence. The nationalist struggle marks the great rise of the political novel. With the rising political turbulence the writers shifted to writing works that reflected the political situations of the times. It may be seen that nearly every writer of the times wrote at least one novel reflecting the political situation of the times. “…the impact of the political upheaval was so great that even a novelist of such intense sociological concern as R. K. Narayan and one of deep metaphysical concern like Raja Rao could not but help writing at least one political novel each” (Bhatnagar O. P. 3).

Nations with a long history of colonial rule hardly escape the influence of nationalism which expresses itself in literature through exploration of the political motif. It gives the author and the reader the sense of belongingness and participation in the situation of the country. Madame de Stael opines that, “Literature, itself shaped by a nation’s character, is the measure of the learning of both the best minds and the ordinary ones” (30). The presence of the political events in the texts gave the authors and the readers that sense of learning and empathizing with the situation. Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*, published in 1956, and the short stories of Saadat Hasan Manto are classic examples of how the imagery of the times reflects the political turmoil of the times and makes the reader more aware of them.

The time and setting of the novels taken for study is 20th century and they have been composed by authors belonging to different space and time. The novels reflect the political history and set-up of India viewing it from their own time and space. The
five novels may or may not classify as political novels, an opinion relying largely on the perspective from which the texts are approached, but nevertheless, they do carry political representations in one way or the other.

The first novel, *A Passage to India*, is a political novel in that it deals with colonial India, the British rule over the country, and above all, the political question of the compatibility of the British and the Indians. In the second novel, *Midnight's Children*, the characters act in the backdrop of a politically unstable India and reveal India, both pre- and post- independence. *The Great Indian Novel* concentrates on the ‘ideas’ of independence struggle, its history, and the struggle for political power after independence. *Kitne Pakistan* also deals with some of the most turbulent political and religious issues that have haunted India over the past few centuries and the mixing of religion and politics for power. The last novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* primarily addresses the issue of Gorkha insurgency and trouble in the East in the backdrop of which the characters act in the narrative. It addresses the social life in East India in the wake of the political turbulence prevalent there.

However, each one of these novels have more than just politics and hence labeling them as mere political novels shall be narrowing their frontiers and scope greatly. The subsequent chapters of this thesis shall discuss some of those other aspects. The current chapter focuses on the portrayal of politics and political history of India in the five texts. Each of the five novels has political overtones and in this chapter attempt shall be made to analyze how the authors have dealt with them.

*A Passage to India* is believed to be Forster’s magnum opus alongside *Howard’s End*. The Western critics like Lionel Trilling and Brenda Gardner have claimed it to be a highly ‘elusive’ and ‘enigmatic’ novel. Most of the traditional criticism of *A Passage to India* centres on the mystery it carries around the Marabar Caves. Critics like Oliver Stallybrass opine that at the level of the story, there is the notorious unresolved riddle regarding the Marabar Caves. As a matter of fact, *A Passage to India* is seen as a reflection of the Indian social and political life as it actually was then. Peter Burra exclaimed that it is a book which cannot be ignored by any student of the “Indian question”.

42
The critics have looked at the novel as the one that portrays the problems of the English in colonial India. Trilling suggests that *A Passage to India* is Forster’s best known and most widely read novel. He also asserts that in England the book was a matter of controversy while its success in America was due to the superiority the Americans felt at the English botch of India. India, then, is explored by a colonial, aware of the disgrace that awaits following a failure to tame her.

Hence, the British try to tame the Indian ‘muddle’ through their political power and presence. The British strive for a space in the ‘muddle’ through attempting to enter it. This attempt is at three levels in the text. First, they create a physical space in contrast to the muddle and it “shares nothing with the city except the overarching sky” (*A Passage to India* 5). Then they try to pierce it through power. This is evident in the behavior of the likes of Ronny who want to master it through ‘force’. In contrast to these characters are the characters like Fielding, Mrs Moore and Adela who try to enter the muddle by trying to understand it.

The creation of a separate space amidst the ‘muddle’ that is distinctly ‘better’ than it gives the impression that the ‘muddle’ is uniquely Indian while the West is in high contrast to it. “the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary. Edged rather than washed by the river Ganges...the rubbish it deposits so freely...the Ganges happens not to be holy here...The streets are mean, the temples ineffective. Houses do fall, people are drowned and left rotting” (*A Passage to India* 3-4). The use of words and the tone in which they are spoken by Forster reflect a few critical things: words like ‘edged’, ‘rubbish’, ‘mean’, ‘ineffective’ and ‘rotting’ are a reflection of the muddle that is India. The tone does not seem ironic or satiric, but a representation of the great Indian muddle. In contrast is the British space defined as, “Inland, the prospect alters. Houses belonging to Eurasians....on the second rise is laid out the little civil station, and viewed hence Chandrapore appears to be a totally different place. It is a city of Gardens. It is no city, but a forest sparsely scattered with huts. It is a tropical pleasaunce washed by a noble river...the civil station...is sensibly planned...and only the view is beautiful; it shares nothing with the city except the overarching sky” (*A Passage to India* 4-5).

The distinction between the British space and the Indian space and the superiority of the latter is evident here. Juliane Behm says, “...the different appearances of the
British and the Indian places are originally the most obvious features of the distinctiveness between the eastern and the Western culture" (5). Chandrapore then is two entities simultaneously depending on the space being considered, a ‘city of gardens’, ‘noble river’ and ‘beautiful’ on the one hand while “rubbish”, “mean” and “ineffective” on the other and the two ‘share nothing’.

The text distinguishes the Indians from the British with the latter assuming the superior status. This spatial difference is defined by one word ‘Eurasians’, the Europeans in the country. With their entry into the fray the description and the use of words change. As Peter Pels and Oscar Salemink in “Introduction: Locating the Local Subjects of Anthropology”, assert that it suggests an “alternative interpretation...different genealogies of “fetishism”, “virgin birth”,...; different constructions of the “native point of view” or the “field”...” (1). The English, it seems, by virtue of their sheer presence convert the ‘rotting’ ‘rubbish’ into a ‘beautiful’ ‘city of gardens’. The paradox in the passage throws light on the political scenario prevalent in India in colonial times. It is a dichotomy introduced by Forster and stays throughout the text. The British ‘beauty’ and the Indian ‘muddle’ have their roots in the binary opposite of the colonizer-colonized.

Forster, by virtue of such a narrative in the very beginning, introduces the readers to two different perspectives that continue throughout the novel at different levels. At the primary level, in terms of the political relationship, Forster is representing the question of Indians vs the English. Both have been placed in India and Forster tries to juxtapose the two viewpoints in pursuit of an answer to the question that looms large over the novel: Can the Indians and the English be friends? The other perspectives revolve around this primary perspective.

This duality between the British and the Indians is explored through the text at various planes. A distinction is reflected through the difference between the oral Indian tradition and the literary British tradition. The British in the text emphasize on written documents as against the Indians who rely more on the word of mouth. The Britishers send written invitations to the Indians for the Bridge Party. The people who have not received the invitation are not supposed to attend the party. On the other hand, after the party when Mrs Bhattacharaya and her husband ‘invite’ Mrs Moore and Adela, it is done orally as against the British formal method of inviting. There is no written
exchange between them. This in turn reflects another duality between the English and the Natives: the Public and the Private Space. India abhors the idea of a private space and is much more open than its British counterparts who are fiercely protective of their private space. The written invitations ensure that only select guests come to the Bridge Party. Tony E. Jackson observes: “Right away we find in Forster’s novel one of the primary distinctions between British visitor [and]...and Indian... [they] appear in two opposed notions of the public and the private” (3).

The Indians, on the other hand are comfortable with their oral tradition as one finds Dr Aziz reciting his poems to his friends who are equally delighted at hearing him recite. Aziz’s poetic ability is in direct contrast to the written prosaic system advocated by the British. Tony E. Jackson adds, “…the association of Aziz with poetry automatically sets him in opposition to writing...Conversely, the British are associated with prose…” (4). Dr Aziz and his friends are not illiterate to be relying on the oral tradition. They are literate people educated in the British style of education, yet they have an affiliation for the oral tradition. Aziz, later in the text, is described as a writer of “illogical poems” which reflects the difference in the evaluation of the West about the East.

Towards the end of the text there is Godbole singing songs in praise of Lord Krishna. What he sings are dohas of Kabir but they form a part of the oral tradition as they are meant to be sung primarily. The collision of the boats towards the end of the novel symbolizes the inability of the British to fathom the Indian oral tradition, at display then through the songs, as they are entrenched in their overt written culture. In fact, the song troubles “the ear” which however, is only the British ear being referred to by Forster because “the servants” can understand the song. ‘Servants’ become symbolic of the political order prevailing in the text. The distinction and the physical difference between the British and the Indians is clearly visible here. Aziz’s poems do not have a bearing on the narrative but they too highlight the distinction between the ruler and the ruled.

What Forster seems to be emphasizing, then, is the essential difference between the British and the Indians. Moreover, with his emphasis on the ‘change’ the Eurasians have brought to Chandrapore and his emphasis on the literary tradition highlight the fact that it is the British who have the upper hand in that they emerge as more
civilized and sophisticated. Hiren Gohain says, "...Forster never disavowed colonialism" (58) and so the text focuses on the colonial difference between the Indians and the British.

However, the idea of the oral vs. the literary tradition can be evaluated in another light. The juxtaposition of the Indian Oral tradition with the written tradition of the West can be seen as an admission by Forster of the existence of an order distinct from theirs. Hiren Gohain adds, "Underneath the glow of imperial and native rhetoric Forster was shrewd enough to detect the mire of political power, the slimy obstinacy of the Empire" (58). An alternative civilization is put forward that stands in contrast to the British civilization. Forster may well be advocating an alternative order in the wake of the political role being performed by the British in India. To evaluate this aspect the role of one character, namely Fielding, becomes central.

Cyril Fielding is Principal of a government college near Chandrapore, an independent man who believes in educating the Indians and is much more sympathetic towards the native population than most English in India. He stands by Aziz when the latter is accused of attempting to molest Adela Quested in the Marabar caves. However, later, as the novel progresses, their friendship develops a crack, once Fielding befriends Adela after the court case is over. Fielding leaves for England after the case and Aziz comes to know that he has married Adela in England. A married Fielding returns to India after a gap of two years but during those two years Aziz has undergone a change and hence even after knowing that Fielding has married Stella and not Adela he is not able to renew his friendship with him in spite of Fielding wanting it.

Fielding's character has been delineated in terms of his humanity rather than as an Englishman. As a result, he has a pro-Indian liberal attitude which strains his relationship with the English in India. When he supports Adela after the court case, his humane side comes to the fore revealing that the character of Fielding has not been constructed in relation to his Englishness but as an individual embodying certain humanistic values. Harold Bloom asserts, "If they wish to alleviate the sufferings of the exploited classes, let them live up to their pretensions, let them abandon the academy and go out there and work politically and economically and in a humanitarian spirit" (qtd in Currie 74-75). Fielding is the only character who mingles and works with the Indians and hence nurtures a sympathetic attitude towards them.
However, at no place is he a traitor to British imperialism, nor is he estranged from
the British culture. He goes along nicely with the British in England but finds it hard
to be one of them here in India. He is unable to fathom the way the British go about
their work in India and this makes him sympathetic to the Indians. However, this does
not go down well with the British in India. The character of Fielding is said to be
modeled on Forster who, as some critics assert, is caricaturing the British ruling class
in *A Passage to India*. Fielding, thus, symbolizes the liberal Britain, arousing the
conscience of the British *sahibs* in India.

Fielding, then, emerges as a political misfit in India because the ‘correct’ attitude
towards the Indians, of the British, is that of the ‘master’. Ronny asserts in the
narrative, “What do you [Mrs Moore] and Adela want me to do? Go against my class,
against all the people I respect and admire out here? Lose such power as I have for
doing good in this country because my behaviour isn’t pleasant? You neither of you
understand what work is, or you’d never talk such eyewash. I hate talking like this,
but one must occasionally...I am out here to work, mind, to hold this wretched
country by force...We’re not pleasant in India, and we don’t intend to be pleasant.
We’ve something more important to do” (*A Passage to India* 51-52). This political
situation in India leaves little room for humanism, humanity and liberal characters
like Fielding. Malcom Bradbury says that “cultured humanism itself has some severe
challenges in the novel...And of course it is challenged not just by Indian politics, by
the problems of the Imperial relationship; but also by the land, by geography and
nature” (17-18). The reason for this failure is also elaborated by Bradbury when he
says, “For man is dwarfed, here in India,...The orders, judgements and values that
seem familiar in England obviously cannot serve as they did. And gradually we find
that this is a novel in which the human world, and humanism itself, are placed against
larger forces” (18).

The character of Fielding in the political backdrop can be seen from another
perspective as well. When the British and the world would be able to understand the
mind of the Indians then it would be realized that the colonization was willed by the
Indians as well and hence their domination by the English shall stand justified. Gloria
Godwin Raheja in “The Illusion of Consent: Language, Caste and Colonial Rule in
India” says, “It was continually asserted or implied that when the “native mind” was
known, it would be apparent that British rule had been erected on a bedrock of consent…” (120). Fielding’s supposed understanding of India, his amicable attitude towards the Indians and his friendship with Dr Aziz seems to symbolize this ‘consent’ in the native’s psyche. However, it seems flawed as the very thought appears hegemonic justification of the colonial presence in India. The failure of Fielding to draw Dr Aziz’s friendship shows that the Indians never consented to British presence in India and hence the entire exercise emerges as an attempt of the colonial power, “to justify its domination of the Indian subcontinent…” (Raheja 120).

Where does Fielding fit in the colonial political representation of India? Is he the symbol of the new political order or a justification of the British presence in India? His relationship with the protagonist of the novel, Dr Aziz, is important to analyze this. Dr Aziz and Fielding become friends quickly and share a very cordial relationship with each other until Fielding leaves for England and marries Mrs Moore’s daughter. Dr Aziz is told that Fielding has married Adela in England and he is not happy about it. Fielding returns from England and tries to revive the friendship with Aziz but Aziz by then has become lackadaisical. The refusal to the friendship comes not from Fielding but from Aziz.

This reflects that Forster was not averse to the British presence in India. He caricatures the *sahibs* of England in India but through Fielding, he also shows how they should go about their work here. Gohain observes, “Forster never makes a clean avowal of the fact that he dislikes and condemns colonialism. Fielding accepts the colonial order in the end, and his mockery of the nationalist dreams of Aziz is allowed to be a direct hit” (58). Forster’s colonial agenda, either deliberately or subconsciously, stays as the central motive. He himself held that Marabar Caves was his “major event” and as the story progresses, it emerges that it also fits into the larger colonial framework. “...A Passage to India not only perpetuates but also constructs the colonialist image of “India” as a cauldron of anarchic eros and as the exotic Other for the West’s voyeuristic eye” (Donaldson 90).

The negation of the Indian argument and the abrupt outburst by Dr Aziz in the end putting to rest any possibilities of a friendship between the natives and the British strengthen the idea that the text persists in the validation of the prevailing political set-up. Forster’s speaking ‘for’ the Indians’ in the end questions the authenticity of the
text because after abstaining from revealing the Indian perspective throughout the text, his sudden giving of a ‘voice’ to Dr Aziz justifies the colonial discourse more than Indian resentment. Rey Chow holds, “As we challenge...by ‘resurrecting’ the victimized voice/self of the native with our readings we step far too quickly, into the otherwise silent and invisible place of the native and turn ourselves into living agents/witnesses for her. This process...also neutralizes the untranslatability of the native’s experience and the history of that untranslatability” (qtd in Parmar 82).

The ‘muddle’ that is at the centre of action also assumes importance in the political portrayal in the text. This ‘muddle’ can be seen at various levels. One, it is the Indian way of living and their oral tradition that is unfathomable to the British who are into a more ‘dignified’ way of living and a written tradition. It can also stand for all the aspects of India that Forster missed and hence did not reveal in the text. It can be seen as India’s way of retaliating against the colonial domination. Encountering its masters through a mystery, depicted in the novel through the Marabar caves, India eludes the English, irrespective of their attitude towards the country and the people. As a result, Mrs Moore and Adela could not resolve it and men like Ronny never tried to. Behm asserts, “In response to the British cruelty, India confronts its colonizers with muddle and mystery, and also with hostility and resistance. It presents itself as ‘an amorphous state of mind, figure of inchoate formlessness, a destroyer of meaning’ which are particularly described by the mysteries of the Marabar caves” (7).

In all the cases, one thing that stands common is that the ‘muddle’ signifies the unknown to Forster. John Dixon Hunt opines in his article, “Muddle and Mystery in A Passage to India, ‘...their Western viewpoint is limited: for the ‘approaching triumph of India was a muddle (as we call it), a frustration of reason and form’” (498). India then remains a quagmire, a ‘muddle’ that the English cannot fathom. However, their political presence makes it necessary to ‘clear’ it. The problem arises with the fact that they lack the method to do so. The answer to the ‘muddle’ will be their ‘passage to India’. Ronny asserts in the text, “No one can even begin to think of knowing this country until he has been in it twenty years” (A Passage to India 27-28). That it takes a long time to ‘think of’ knowing India reflects the wide chasm between the natives and the British that the ‘muddle’ symbolizes. In addition, the muddle is equally ‘distasteful’ to the British because it signifies an order beyond the rational order they
practice as the imperialists. It is the symbolic world beyond the scientific realism of the British. Hence Ronny and the British *sahibs* do not like it at all and are concerned only with keeping the surface order in place which can be done through the use of ‘force’. The muddle requires the ‘essential spirit’ to decode which probably the Indians possess in Godbole’s songs and Aziz’s poetry recitations.

Another perspective that the novel builds is that the muddle is unknowable to the West. The country is a ‘muddle’ for them when Mrs Moore and Adela come to India. The sahibs of the English aristocracy who are around them do not help either as they are least concerned with knowing it. The ladies aim at finding something from this ‘muddle’ and hence are glad when they meet Aziz, as he seems to them to be a source for finding ‘true India’. The narrative of India given by the English bureaucracy to the two ladies seems to find a solid ground when both the ladies have a feeling of dejection in the caves. This dejection is due to claustrophobia, but for Mrs Moore it is the inability to find anything concrete in the ‘muddle’. J. D. Hunt opines, “Mrs Moore...certainly responds to India...she is finally overwhelmed by the muddle of the Marabar Caves” (509). As a result she leaves India, her passage to the country a failure. Adela, on the other hand, misinterprets the incident into an attempted assault on her modesty by Aziz and drags him to the court. However, she withdraws the case later and goes back to England. The outcome is the same as for Mrs Moore, it is just that she tried to ‘punish the muddle’ but in vain. Forster broaches the subject of the ‘muddle’ further when Fielding returns with Stella and Ralph Moore. The boat journey and the subsequent collision of the two boats symbolize the fact that the ‘muddle’ remains. Prior to the boat episode, Forster, at one place says, “They sang not even to the God who confronted them, but to a saint; they did not one thing which the non-Hindu would feel dramatically correct; this approaching triumph of India was a muddle (as we call it), a frustration of reason and form” (*A Passage to India* 319).

Forster seems to emerge as a Western colonial and dominantly authorial in the narrative. The colonial mindset, consciously or unconsciously, plays on his mind thereby giving a fixed shape to the reader. Forster himself says in an interview, “The novelist should, I think, always settle when he starts what is going to happen, what his major event is to be. He may alter this event as he approaches it, indeed he probably will, indeed he probably had better, or the novel becomes tied up and tight. But the
sense of a solid mass ahead, a mountain round or over, or through which the story
must somehow go, is most valuable and, for the novels I’ve tried to write, essential”
(qtd. in Furbank 27-28).

*A Passage to India*, then, emerges as an anti-colonial text shattering the ‘white man’s
burden’, or as a pro-colonial text justifying the British presence in India? Critics have
a divided opinion over the issue. A crucial factor that emerges here is the role of
language as a political tool. The British are here to ‘do good in this country’ and have
‘something more important to do’. But the irony is that this ‘good’ has to come about
by ‘holding this wretched country by force’ and not by ‘being pleasant’. The British
superiority and the need to use ‘force’ refer to the ‘White man’s burden’ here.
Fielding does not fit in this plan and as a result becomes a political misfit in India.
Behm says, “...it is the British officials like Ronny Heaslop, Mr. Turton and Mr.
Callendar who establish and try to maintain “a climate of political domination” by
showing their presence, discriminating and excluding Indians natives, and attempting
to prevent the social mixing of the various Indian civilizations with the British culture
at any rate” (6). While critics like Molly B. Tinsley opine, “If, as Turner suggests,
orderly hypotaxis is a correlative for European civilization, it is not surprising to find
the Forster of *A Passage to India* exploring ways to discard or at least disrupt it”
(191). The liberal point-of-view, the displaying of the oral tradition of India and the
caricaturing of the *sahibs* indicate an anti-colonial and anti-imperialistic strain.
However, the distinction of Chandrapore into the British and Indian sections, the
closure of a friendship between the British and Indians, absence of any justification
for the British presence and the mocking of Aziz’s patriotism indicate a colonial
perspective by Forster. Lionel Trilling observes, “*A Passage to India* is not a radical
novel...It is not concerned to show that the English should not be in India at all...The
novel proceeds on an imperialistic premise” (qtd in Hawkins 55). This duality has
made the novel a classic for a long time as it still eludes a distinct categorization. The
fluidity of the evaluations made Ralph Wright assert, “At least we can be certain of
one thing, that patriots on neither side will bless him for it” (52). Alternatively, the
assessment of India and colonialism can be summed up in Dickinson’s words: “There
is no solution to the problem of governing India. Our presence is a curse both to them
and to us...I believe that to the last word” (qtd. in Trilling, “*A Passage to India*” 78).
A Passage to India, then, emerges as a complex text that reflects the presence of two distinct civilizations and political set-ups: Indian and the British. In this juxtaposition, largely, the British emerge superior to the natives and hence, even though the sympathies lie with the Indians, shown through characters like Mrs Moore and Fielding, neither does he question the british presence in India nor the ‘white man’s burden’. The failure of Mrs Moore and Fielding to pierce the great Indian ‘muddle’ through their sympathetic attitude symbolizes the validity of the British presence in India, albeit with some changes in their way of governance.

Midnight’s Children deals with the story of Saleem Sinai who is born along with independent India hence sharing the relationship of a twin with India. His life, as a result, is intricately and complexly intertwined with that of India. Through and alongside Saleem, Rushdie has attempted a representation of India. He says in the Introduction, “If he and India were to be paired, I would need to tell the story of both twins. Then Saleem, ever a striver for meaning, suggested to me that the whole of modern Indian history happened as it did because of him; that history, the life of his nation-twin, was somehow all his fault” (x). Critics argue that Midnight’s Children in doing so adheres to the ancient Indian philosophy of the cosmic in the individual.

The text, then clearly deals with the story of the nation, India. The story starts in the year 1915, “Now, returning, he saw through travelled eyes. Instead of the beauty of the tiny valley circled by giant teeth, he noticed the narrowness, the proximity of the horizon; and felt sad, to be at home and feel so utterly enclosed. He also felt – inexplicably – as though the old place resented his educated, stethoscoped return...the years in Germany had returned him to a hostile environment” (Midnight’s Children 5-6). The very beginning creates a conflict in the work, a conflict between an ‘insider’ and an ‘exile’ talking about India. This is significant in the light of the fact that Rushdie himself is an expatriate thereby underlining the self-reflexive nature of the work. Aadam Aziz has been to Germany and with his arrival back in India, suddenly the things start looking different to him: the ‘beauty’ of the valley transforming into ‘narrowness’. The change reflects what Rushdie also says in his Imaginary Homelands that exiles attempt to make imaginary homelands abroad and alongside this is their inability to abandon their homeland. This creates a situation in which they fail to belong to either side.
Rushdie, thus, right in the beginning of the novel reveals that the perspective in the narrative is not that of an insider but of an exile, an outsider. This happens even when there is an Indian born Saleem narrating the story, because Rushdie himself is an outsider. The gap that emerges is referred to as ‘the hole’ by Rushdie which stays throughout with such people. This confession, right at the beginning of the text is a testimony of the author’s acceptance of his status and has a significant impact on the way the text is narrated.

This detail regarding the novel and the status of Rushdie as an ‘outsider’ is critical in the context of the chapter for it provides ample space, as a number of critics have noted, for political overtones in the narrative. They suggest that Rushdie’s India is worthless and meant only for a select audience. Neil Ten Kortenaar opines, “Not everyone is as taken by the novel, however. In particular, its status as a representation of India has been challenged. Some, like Harish Trivedi, have resented that Western critics and academics treat Rushdie as if he invented India or gave the continent a voice. Trivedi points out that Midnight’s Children “is written for unilingual English-language readers for whom translations of Hindi-Urdu words are always embedded in the text...Richard Cronin argues that Rushdie’s hubristic project of encapsulating India proves that he is an outsider who thinks in English, inevitably closer in spirit to Kipling than to writers living in India...” (qtd. in Kortenaar, Self, Nation, text in Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children 4). Critics assert that Rushdie falls in line with the long English tradition of the ‘exotic fantasia’ which beginning with Jonathan Swift and Daniel Defoe has established itself firmly in English literature. This ‘exotic fantasia’, believe certain critics, Rushdie “has been able to emulate very successfully...Rushdie now steps into...the trappings of wit, humour and satire, that were the hallmarks of British fiction in the grand old days which, again, only goes to prove that the Raj isn’t dead after all” (Mahanta 244).

Saleem, ‘the midnight born’ is vested with a special power, of being able to enter into the minds of other people and later to be able to smell and identify everything, including people and feelings. This seems highly unrealistic, romantic and fantastical but is critical to the novel and the subsequent portrayal of India by the author. Rushdie says, “…my debt...to...Dickens for his great, rotting, Bombay-like city, and his ability to root his larger-than-life characters and surrealist imagery in a sharply
observed, almost hyper-realistic background, out of which the comic and fantastic elements of his work seemed to grow organically, becoming intensifications of, and not escapes from, the real world” (“Introduction”, *Midnight’s Children* xii). Moreover, this ‘power’ of Saleem places him in the category of the heroes of the traditional Epic genre, superhuman and divine. However, owing to the fact that it is ‘Saleem’s story’, it becomes a subjective portrayal wherein he places himself at the helm of affairs rather than the objective narrative of an Epic.

Through the narrative of his life he is weaving an India for the Western English educated audience, “…the fusion of an individual body with the subcontinent and a personal biography with its political history” (Kane 95). It assumes the status of an epic in which the ‘superhuman’ hero counters the objections of a rational and scientific modern Western world. His own story that goes on with the story of India actually authenticates the nation’s story and his role as the superhero in it. Such a narrator and a protagonist in the story asserts its status as a work of art rather than a chronicle and Rushdie himself says, “…my mother...immediately understood that it was ‘just a story...’” (“Introduction”, *Midnight’s Children* xii), thereby ascertaining the fictional status of the work. Even though, as Rushdie himself confesses, the characters are drawn from real life, the story is essentially a piece of creative writing and fiction.

Rushdie, through Saleem, counters the European literary hegemony and thought with Indian mythologies and thought. “…Ayurvedic philosophy interprets the person as a microcosm. Saleem Sinai exemplifies this collective, revisionary, and somatic subject” (Kane 96). This portrayal of Saleem becomes important in view of the vastness of the nation and provides a focal point around which the story of the country can be narrated. Saleem narrates a story older to him by two generations starting with his grandfather Aadam Sinai in Kashmir and this requires special attributes. His arrival is prophesied making him unique even before his birth, “A son, Sahiba, who will never be older than his motherland - neither older nor younger...There will be two heads -but you shall see only one -there will be knees and a nose, a nose and knees...Newspaper praises him, two mothers raise him!...voices will guide him! Friends mutilate him -blood will betray him!...He will have sons without having sons! He will be old before he is old! And he will die...before he is dead” (*Midnight’s
Children 114-115). Saying this, Ramram Seth “fell suddenly to the floor and frothed at the mouth” (115).

The text, then, has political overtones structurally but it is not a colonially motivated text. It assumes a post-colonial Third-world ‘strike’ back at the colonial masters with its own weapons and devices. Rushdie attempts to re-create an Indian Epic to highlight India and for the purpose, the ancient Indian style is adopted rather than the modern western literary style of empiricism and reason, “Rushdie exploits Saleem’s status as the godlike author at play in unmoored language, while simultaneously governing this artifice in accordance with a Vedic logic” (Kane 104). What is being narrated in the text is an oral picture in Saleem’s mind that is being written by him. In other words, the text assumes the stature of a modified Primary Epic, a ‘lost’ literary form. “…Rushdie himself composes a work that self-consciously asserts its own epic status” (Su 546). The story however, has not travelled to Saleem from his ancestors but he knows it by virtue of his ‘innate superpower’. By doing so, he achieves two purposes: first, the Western Literary style is challenged by the Indian style of mythologies, oral tradition and folklore. “European literature has chronological priority over Indian (English) mythmaking. But India, like most independent entities, wishes to create its own identity” (Karamcheti 82) and Rushdie achieves exactly that. Secondly, the extinct western literary genre of Primary Epics is not only revived but also modified. Samir Dayal, in his article “Talking Dirty: Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children” asserts, “In Midnight’s Children, hybridity and impurity are intentionally foregrounded…” (434). Rushdie, then, creates a parallel post-colonial India against the West’s colonial representation of the nation. Indira Karamcheti opines, “He subverts in order to legitimize his own, specifically Indian mythologies” (Karamcheti 83).

Another element that supports the idea of a political “strike back” is the language that is ‘Indianized’ English rather than the standard English of the West. “Rushdie’s own attempt is to achieve a self-reflexive and organic ‘english’. Much of the novel is in standard English, although most of the characters speak in an indigenized, Indian ‘english’ (spiked liberally with transliterated native words). Saleem’s peculiar language entails a postcolonial gesture of reappropriation of the former colonizer’s language” (Dayal, “Talking Dirty…” 433). The text uses English as the medium of
narration, as the mediator between the work of art and the viewer. However, it enacts a role more important than merely that. It questions the ‘standard’ English of the West by countering it with its Indian version. The use of Indian English carries the ‘Indian voice’ across to the West, who have largely interpreted the East in their own language and from their own viewpoint.

The use of ‘english’ as the medium then raises eyebrows of several critics who opine that he might as well use a vernacular if he wanted to question the colonizer’s language. However, Rushide says in *Imaginary Homelands* that people once colonized by the colonizer’s language are now remaking and domesticating it thereby carving out territories for themselves within its frontiers. Rushdie has varied the linguistic code rather than the standard code of English creating a ‘domesticated’ English to counter the standard English of the West.

The structure of the text, in this case assumes the form of a political allegory. It reveals the story of Saleem and India but at the same time it reverts back to the West, questioning and challenging its colonization of the Orient for a long time. Rushdie structures *Midnight’s Children* countering the West’s notions of its inherent superiority. Moreover, this structural allegory also assumes importance as it is impossible to fathom the entire sub-continent’s reality in a direct narrative. By virtue of the allegory, the text validates itself as the narrative of the nation. While Dr Aziz in *A Passage to India* is mocked at by Fielding when he raises his patriotic fervor, Saleem and his story validate Dr Aziz and his cry. Indira Karamcheti asserts, “Rushdie’s Indian genesis successfully challenges the European subtexts it subverts” (84).

However, his Indian myth and the political allegory receive a setback from several incidents pertaining to pre-independence as well as the post-independence times. The superhero Saleem is not able to get past these aspects of the nation like an epic-hero. In the structural ‘strike back of the Empire’, the incidents appear to create a limitation.

Jallianwalla Bagh is one such incident. Dr Aadam happens to be in Amritsar at the time of the event and bears witness to the bloodshed on the day. The incident leaves a scar on the alternative ‘Indian myth’ as Saleem is unable to emerge a savior like the superhero of an epic. The fact that he is not born yet justifies his ‘inability’ to cope
with the incident. But then, Rushdie’s ‘mythology’ is not a complete failure because the times being discussed pertain to pre-independence. More than a failure of the ‘Indian myth’, it represents the political relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. What Rushdie has done here is to present the two disparate view-points, the Indian and the colonial’s. While Dr Aadam Aziz’s replies to his wife about his whereabouts are, “Nowhere on earth,” he said, and began to shake in her arms” (Midnight’s Children 42), for General Dyer it is a job well done. “Good shooting,” Dyer tells his men, ‘we have done a jolly good thing’” (42).

While Dr Aadam ‘trembles’, General Dyer ‘rejoices’ at the success. The oxymoron indicates the wide chasm in the evaluation of the political situation. Norbert Schurer says, “Rushdie...uses the massacre to point out how different individuals and traditions interpret history differently: While Aadam is horrified by the slaughter, Dyer is quoted as saying, ‘We have done a jolly good thing’” (25). The text poses a direct question at the validity of the colonial presence in India by juxtaposing the Indian response to the colonizer’s response to an incident of massacre. Rukmini Bhaya Nair opines in “Text and Pre-Text: History as Gossip in Rushdie’s Novels”, “Midnight’s Children...seems to be about competing interpretations of Historical texts” (994). The ‘historical text’, which in this case happens to be the Jallainwala Bagh massacre, is differently interpreted by the colonizer and the colonized and through this, the colonial legacy in the country has been questioned.

The ugliness behind the Red Fort also appears to distort the author’s “Indian myth”. “…here is Amina Sinai beneath the high walls of the Red Fort, where Mughals ruled, from whose heights the new nation will be proclaimed...she enters these causeways where poverty eats away at the tarmac like a draught, where people lead their invisible lives, [and] something new begins to assail her...” (Midnight’s Children 104-105). The narrative reveals a dark facet of India and Indian politics. It also reveals the indifference of Indian politics towards the darker aspect of the country, the deliberate negligence by politics and political powers. This is a new dimension of India for Amina that she experiences while traveling with Lifafa Das. She is uncomfortable with this new revelation and says, “How terrible, truly!” (Midnight’s Children 105).
The entire episode begins near the Red Fort, the symbol of India’s democracy, the place from where the leaders of the country will subsequently deliver speeches and talk about moving into the elite group of developed nations, with independence, while at the back of it is teething poverty and dirt. This ‘other’ reality of India is something that Indian politics has not found time for. The reason, too is offered, “When you have city eyes you cannot see the invisible people, the men with elephantiasis of the balls and the beggars in boxcars don’t impinge on you...” (Midnight’s Children 105).

Analyzing the entire scene it appears that Rushdie is hitting out at the corruption in the country. The scenario remains more or less the same even in the post-independence period. “...by the Plan’s end in 1961, and although, during those five years, the number of landless and unemployed masses actually increased, so that it was greater than it had ever been under the British Raj, there were also substantial gains. The production of iron ore was almost doubled; power capacity did double; coal production leaped from thirty-eight million to fifty-four million tons. Five billion yards of cotton textiles were produced each year...But I can’t help ending on a downbeat: illiteracy survived unscathed; the population continued to mushroom” (Midnight’s Children 285).

However, there is more to this than meets the eye. The juxtaposition of the affluence of Amina and the teething poverty of the Delhi slums and the continuity of the apathy even after independence questions the very tenets of a modern nation. It highlights the illusion of public concern where actually personal stakes are procured. Teresa Heffernan opines that “Midnight’s Children invokes the myth of public communities while all the while ensuring...private interests” (478). The representation of the Delhi slums distort the alternative ‘Indian myth’ of Rushdie as Saleem, the protagonist of the adapted epic, has no ‘solution’ to it. But in doing so Rushdie throws light on the continuing apathy towards the ‘common men’ by their ‘own’ government. He highlights the continuation of ‘babuism’, with the reign now in the hands of the ‘brown babus’ instead of the white one. The aberration from the standard ‘Indian myth’ in the two cases reflects the presence of ‘multiple voices’ reflecting the strengths and weaknesses of India.

Another incident ‘tainting’ the ‘Indian myth’ is the one that is by far the most traumatic event in the political history of the country: partition. “...the clocks in
Pakistan would run half an hour ahead of their Indian counterparts...Mr Kemal, who wanted nothing to do with Partition, was fond of saying, "Here's proof of the folly of the scheme! Those Leaguers plan to abscond with a whole thirty minutes! Time Without Partitions,...And S. P. Butt said, "If they can change the time just like that, what's real any more? I ask you? What's true?" (Midnight's Children 102-103).

Such 'minor' repercussions normally go unnoticed in the face of the 'bigger' ones like riots and abandoning one's land and roots for a different one. Emphasis lies on a new political religious identity that suddenly categorizes one as a minority in a place one has lived for years without realizing about this kind of a 'minority' status. Rushdie, by catering to an alternative point-of-view regarding Partition asserts the importance of the hitherto unacknowledged aspects of politics and history and the presence of disparate voices regarding a particular incident. Moreover, in catering to the 'Indian myth' Rushdie questions the colonial competence to enforce an event of such magnitude and repercussions on a colony, especially at a time when they are about to wind up. What Rushdie rakes up here is the question of time and this reminds one of the adoption of the Georgian Calendar by the British leading to a big clamor over the 'stolen time' of 11 days as 3rd September of Julian Calendar became 14th September, 1752. While dividing the time for India and Pakistan, the same race of colonizers, who raised an outcry when the new calendar was adopted for them, did not bother about the thirty 'absconded' minutes showing the apathy of the colonizer towards its subjects.

The Emergency also appears as a blot in Rushdie's India, "...although there is considerable disagreement about the number of 'political' prisoners taken during the Emergency ...All sorts of things happen during an Emergency: trains run on time, black money hoarders are frightened into paying taxes, even the weather is brought to heel, and bumper harvests are reaped; there is, I repeat, a white part as well as a black..." (Midnight's Children 606). Looking closely at the language, the irony in the tone emerges clearly. 'Trains run on time', but Rushdie does not speak of the perils involved in traveling at such times when the fundamental rights stand withdrawn. People pay taxes but they are 'forced' to do so which means that tax evasion is a regular feature among Indians. The paradox of the 'black and the white' reflects the prevailing situation in the country.
Is Rushdie’s ‘Indian myth’ and the allegory countering the West, then, a failure owing to the presence of these incidents or not? The answer is ambiguous with critics sideing with both. One group asserts that the allegory is a failure and an alternative ‘Indian myth’ fails to emerge as the incidents like the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre, the slums behind the Red Fort and partition reduce its status. However, asserts the other group of critics, looking structurally it emerges that Jallianwalla Bagh and the Partitions question the colonial legitimacy and the apathy of the colonial power thereby countering the colonial perspectives of the Western genres. The Delhi slums, on the other hand, are a continuous presence, with the text unable to cope with it. This indicates the necessity to get rid of the colonial legacy that is still prevalent in the country though the colonial rule is over. It reflects that the ‘modern Indian nation’, the one dreamed of by Nehru, needs to go back to the times prior to the arrival of the colonials. “You are the newest bearer of that ancient face of India which is so eternally young” (Midnight’s Children 167). Teresa Heffeman opines, “As an Indian nationalist, Nehru invokes a ‘spiritual’ India as distinct from the rational, secular state, both to distinguish the new nation from its colonial heritage and to suggest that liberation from colonial rule involves a return to a national identity that has been interrupted by colonialism” (473). The Emergency, years later, by the Widow, reflects that India is still a long way from the ‘ideal modern nation’ dreamed of by the likes of Nehru.

Moreover, the incidents assert the presence of multiple voices and points-of-view in Rushdie’s India. However, in spite of this the ‘India’ of Rushdie and Saleem, even though a counter force to the West is not a utopia. As a result perfection is elusive and still a long way, hence the presence of the ‘teething poverty’ behind the Red Fort.

Rushdie also explores the Indian political choice between Nehru and Gandhi. Nehru is present through the letter he writes to Saleem on his birth while Gandhi is present through the news of his assassination and failures. He fails to dominate the narrative and emerges as just a leader who does not command the obedience of the masses even though it is his ‘heyday’. He calls for a hartal and “It is April 7th, 1919, and in Amritsar the Mahatma’s grand design is being distorted... rioting mobs are breaking them [shops and railway station] up” (Midnight’s Children 39).
The paradox of life and death regarding Nehru and Gandhi offers the dichotomy between the two. Patrick Colm Hogan opines, “No doubt there is complexity and ambivalence in Rushdie’s attitude towards Gandhi” (522). Gandhi’s absence and his reference through death made James Harrison assert that Gandhi’s Hinduism did not go well with the point-of-view of Rushdie. Several critics have opined that Gandhi was a hero but the text of Rushdie did not have space for one and hence he is ignored. D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke says, “The text has it that heroes are a rarity; only Gandhi measures up to one” (32). Moreover, Gandhi, in the India of Rushdie and Saleem, dies at the wrong time and this has made critics assert that Rushdie hints that he should have lived to change the destiny of India. Patrick Colm Hogan further says, “…Gandhi should have lived to lead the new nation-presumably in a different direction from the one it ultimately took” (523).

However, the news of Gandhi’s assassination as his only presence in the text also suggests that religion has no place in modern Indian politics. Gandhi’s mixing of religion with the political agenda of independence and partition cost him his life. His desire to have political freedom on ‘his own’ saintly terms is problematized here. Kotrenaar says, “It is as though the assassination revealed the truth about Gandhi: as Collins and Lapiere suggest, by making, ‘the freedom struggle a religious crusade’ Gandhi aroused instinctive and irrational forces that the nationalist intellectual elite was unable to control” (46). Rushdie’s negation of Gandhi in his narrative seems to suggest an aversion to this policy of Gandhi.

Rushdie, in his representation, delves into matters that are not subjective and opinionated. The ransacking and pillaging of partition gives way to the objective issue of time while the Jalliawallah Bagh massacre reveals the difference of ideologies between the Indians and the Westerners. Stanley Aronowitz wrote in “Literature as Social Knowledge: Mikhail Bakhtin and the Reemergence of the Human Sciences” that Bakhtin emphasizes on a character carrying a ‘voice’ and several such ‘voices’ interact with each other to create a dialogue from which the reader deduces ‘his reality’. By juxtaposing the religious and communal East with the intellectual and class oriented West Rushdie has questioned the colonial legacy and its continuing presence in India. Stanley Aronowitz quotes Bakhtin as: “Dostoevsky has created a ‘plurality of equally authoritative ideological positions and an extreme heterogeneity
of material.’” and then says that “this achievement Bakhtin calls polyphony” (156). Rushdie has tried to generate this heterogeneity in *Midnight’s Children* through an open dialogue between different issues and perspectives. Rushdie understands his limitations and accepts the deviations made from ‘actual chronology’, showing his desire to be faithful in his portrayal. In doing so, he offers the reader an authenticity of purpose and intent, critical in a piece of fiction. Rushdie’s description in a work of fiction indicates his acceptance of the status of an ‘outsider’ who has access only to the broadly visible facts and government documents and that too is subject to ‘disagreement’ owing to the fact that even the government data may be motivated.

His subjectivity takes full wings only in the Parliament of the mind that is a symbol of the romantic nationalism. The children of the midnight have a different world, parallel but beyond the government of India. This subjectivity is largely limited to his created parallel universe of Indian democracy and the Sinai family. The entire representation of the political history and events in the novel, hence, has a unique quality of being portrayed from a different perspective from what most writers have done in their works and this portrayal comes in the backdrop of confessions of being an ‘outsider’ producing a work of ‘fiction’. Rushdie avoids making finalizing statements, as they tend to become a mouthpiece of the author. The ‘Indian myth’ of Rushdie questions the colonial viewpoint but it fails as the perfect alternative ‘Indian myth’. As a result, “...it is the privilege and the curse of midnight’s children to be both masters and victims of their times, to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes, and to be unable to live or die in peace” (*Midnight’s Children* 47).

But, as pointed out above, he never intended it to be one. The India of Rushdie dreams of a utopian political set-up. John J. Su says, “…I will argue that the moments of failure in Rushdie’s novel establish a utopian political vision for postindependence India” (547).

The entire narrative, it seems, has centred itself on the history of the Indian sub-continent and it tends to converge on one aspect: Saleem. Saleem and his family stand at the centre validating Rushdie’s alternative construct of ‘his India’. However, the vast variety that he has incorporated in the text, from 1915 to the Emergency, from the Hindu-Muslim duality to the minor Christian characters in the narrative seem to utter chaos but Rushdie successfully manages it by returning to Saleem Sinai, the
focal point of the narrative, who holds the centre firm. But amidst all such apparent
confusions, one thing that asserts itself is the impossibility to construct an India on
monism. India remains a heterogeneous entity. This is underlined by K. Raghavendra
Rao in “The Novel as History as ‘Chutney’: Unriddling Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s
Children*”: “The main thematic leitmotifs of the novel are pieced together with great
skill and subtlety to give us a sense of history as a specially concocted ‘chutney’” (154).

*Midnight’s Children*, then, emerges as a text that attempts at a subversion of the
Western Literary styles, genres and representation. Through the alternative ‘Indian
myth’ Rushdie tries to create an India keeping in view his limitation as an outsider.
There are several limitations to his alternative ‘Indian myth’. His India, then, does not
emerge as the ideal alternative but one that has its own validity and perspective
distinct from the West. The political representation of India of Rushdie, then, reflects
a restricted attempt at the ‘native’s voice’, limited by his outsider status. However, his
India is one of multiple voices and an amalgamation of positives and negatives that
exist simultaneously.

Published simultaneously by Penguin and Viking in 1989, Tharoor’s *The Great
Indian Novel* primarily concerns itself with the representation of India before and after
independence. More precisely, the text elaborates on the political history of India. To
achieve this, the text draws on the Indian epic, *The Mahabharata*. The choice of the
epic is a conscious one as Tharoor himself says in an interview, “[*The Mahabharata*
struck me as a work of such contemporary resonance,... I wanted a vehicle to transmit
some of my political and historical interests in the evolution of modern India. I saw
the recasting of *The Mahabharata* as a perfect vehicle for the two Indias” (Interview
18)

Primarily, the language comes to the fore. The choice of the language as medium
assumes importance. The text is composed in English which is the standard English of
the West and not the Indianized English. The medium reflects the audience Tharoor
intended while composing his ‘classical India’. He aimed at the Indian ‘intelligentsia’
and the Western audience, the ones adept in English. He had three options to choose
from for his medium: Sanskrit, the language of the epic, a vernacular like Hindi, or
English, the language of the globe. Sanskrit would have made the relation to the epic
more visible but the intelligibility of the language is very little, not only in the West but in India as well. A vernacular, especially Hindi, would have given access to the Indian public only whose number probably successfully competes the number of English speaking people in India. The choice of English makes the text visible to the Western audience thereby becoming a window to ‘know’ India for them. Kanishka Chowdhury remarks, “His ultimate linguistic choice is not merely dictated by his familiarity with English, but also situates his audience, which is composed primarily of westernized Indians and the international bourgeoisie” (42).

The political impact of the text, then, lies in the picture of India that it represents. The very basic structural affiliation of the text is to The Mahabharata, the epic that has been, for centuries, the central epic of India along with The Ramayana. Tharoor adapts the cast and events of The Mahabharata and applies them to portray India. Critics have traditionally asserted the insignificance of the structural affiliation to the epic as having any bearing on the understanding of the text. They believe that the understanding of the text is not affected by the fact that it is modeled on The Mahabharata as what it represents can be understood independently. Several others assert that the use of the ancient epic is a clever ploy by Tharoor to defy the colonizer’s narratorial comfort. They opine that Tharoor has utilized a work that does not fall in-line with the Western empirical and rational tradition. Kanishka Chowdhurty opines, “His appropriation of the great Indian epic, the Mahabharata, in order to rewrite Indian history and to restore groups to their historical being is what Homi Bhabha would perhaps call ‘sly civility’, where the ‘native refuses to satisfy the colonizer’s narrative demand’” (42).

However, just like an allegory cannot be fully understood unless the underlying structure beneath the surface story is understood, the text’s complete appreciation becomes a problematic if the underlying structure of The Mahabharata is not analyzed in relation to the text. The presence of the epic structure beneath the surface story of Indian political history can be evaluated at different levels. At one level, the epic is a symbol of India’s Golden Age when truth and dharma reigned supreme. It reflects the ancient Indian history, the Ramrajya, in its full glory. The structure of the epic then becomes a paradox to the India of the 20th century. The importance of this paradox is reflected early on in the text where India is stated to be “in an advanced
state of decay” and a “highly-developed one” (*The Great Indian Novel* 1). The advanced stage, then, goes back to the times of the epic, the structural basis of the text.

It is important to analyze the nature and extent of exposure of the West to the Indian epic. The exposure to *The Mahabharata* for the West largely remains superficial as it does not form a part of their life and culture unlike the Indian tradition where the epic is a part of one’s grooming as well as reminiscent of the glorious Indian past. For them, the epic is just another part of the Indian literary module of mythology. The Western literary modules and their culture do not accept oral and mythological traditions as an active part of their cultural set-up. On the contrary, theirs is a more rational, written and empirical tradition.

Tharoor either is not aware of the West’s exposure to the epic, which seems unlikely, or that Tharoor never intended it to be a paradox. This, however, does not alter the impact of the text on the Western audience. Largely unaware of the *ramrajya* of the ancient times of *The Mahabharata* and its implications, India, for them, in the narrative comes across as a decayed country.

The colonial representation of India does not seem to be altered by Tharoor who seems to be continuing the colonial legacy of India. “These native languages don’t really have much to them, you know. And it’s not as if you have to write poetry in them. A few crucial words, sufficient English for ballast, and you’re sailing smoothly...I have a couple of tricks up my sleeve... ‘There was a banned crow’... ‘There was a cold day’...not bad, eh? ... ‘Sounds like perfect urdu, I’m told...the devil of it is remembering which one means , ‘close the door’, and which one will get someone to open it. Well never mind’” (*The Great Indian Novel* 37). The reverence for Hindi, the ‘national’ language, is not very promising. It is rather seen as the language of the slaves and the conquered, and a bare minimum knowledge of it is sufficient to meet the ‘masters’ requirements’. This linguistic hierarchization never augured well for the colonizers as it only served to deepen the chasm between them and the Indians, a reason why the English should not be in India.

The English biases that prevailed in the colonial times are shown in the narrative through the scheme of entry to ICS. “Vidur topped the written examinations to the
ICS, in which one’s name did not figure on the test paper; in the interview regrettably, the same degree of anonymity did not prevail, and he found himself rapidly downgraded, but not so far as to miss selection altogether" (The Great Indian Novel 42). The narrator reveals how the British did not prefer Indians to be too high on any list as far as possible. The language and the tone adopted in the narration indicate that the induction of Vidur into the ICS was largely owing to the legal compulsion of the English to induct Indians into Civil Services rather than on merit basis. The use of the phrase "rapidly downgraded" indicates an aversion to the capabilities and qualities of the Indians by the Imperialists. However, the stance of the narrator assumes ambiguity when he says, “Yes, we Indians do have a number of dog-like characteristics, such as wagging our tails at white men carrying sticks, and our bark is usually worse than our bite” (The Great Indian Novel 42).

Tharoor’s recent remark on the ‘cattle class’ is of a piece with his text. The ‘dog-like’ characteristics exhibited by the Indians certainly create negative images for the outside readers and a sense of rejection in the minds of the Indian readers. Why is there the need to compare an Indian to a dog, one of the base though faithful animals? Does it indicate the Indian attitude towards the colonizers; that of a servant mixed with feelings of loyalty?

The ambiguity in the narrative here fails to create an elevated multiplicity of meanings; rather it goes on to generate certain negative images in the minds of the Indians and the outsiders alike. To add to this is the narrator’s own confession that words and their choices do make a profound difference. He says, “…he said not ‘oneself’ but ‘one’s self’ which tells you how carefully he weighed his concepts, and his words” (The Great Indian Novel 48). So his choice of ‘dog-like characteristics’ must be a ‘careful’ choice of words. Indians, then, emerge as a ‘politically’ inferior race who acquiesce to the British and their language.

The picture of India that comes across to the West, then, does not challenge but corroborates the colonial representation of the country. The author’s classical picture of India is a pitiable one. India is claimed to be an over-developed nation, in an advanced stage of decay but something that is decaying still has some relics of majesty and grandeur. The Indians know these elements of grandeur co-exist with the ‘decay’. India, as a nation, has been moving forwards as well as backwards and so this
over-developed nation is not ‘decaying’ only but also moving on with its ‘over-
development’. Tharoor portrays only the ‘decay’ in India and presents it as the
‘classical’ picture of the country.

Tharoor does not attempt to challenge the colonial construction of India but rather
becomes a part of it. Another factor that questions the political representation is the
narrator in the novel. Ved Vyas or V.V. is a first person omniscient narrator.
Traditionally, first person narrators are not omniscient as being participants in the
action their view is bound to be limited. But V.V. is omniscient or to be more precise,
near omniscient, through his ‘sources’ that are to be found at every place where
something of relevance is underway. The position of the narrator helps in determining
the direction and preferences of the narrative and, in turn, of the author. As Genette
holds, “...narrative of fiction is produced fictively by its narrator and actually by its
author” (qtd in Jong 4). The position and role of the narrator also goes a long way in
determining the point-of-view endorsed in the narrative.

V.V., or Ved Vyas, the narrator of the novel is a part of the action in the novel. In
fact, it is owing to him that Dhritarashtra, Pandu and Vidur were born and Draupadi
was ‘shared’ equally by the five brothers. Moreover, the presence of a first person
narrator reflects its status as an ‘autobiography’ or ‘memoir of one’s life’ as in
Midnight’s Children. But V.V., the narrator of The Great Indian Novel is not writing
an autobiography but a ‘memoir’ about India, the great country of The Mahabharata.
This means that the narrative in the text is problematic owing to the discrepancy
between its status and the tradition. Tharoor has modified his narrator for two reasons;
first, to suit the epic The Mahabharata and secondly, to suit his own purpose. The
defense he offers is through the narrator himself by asserting the presence of his
’sources’ around that gave him ‘most’ of the news.

This modification flouts the norms of a first person narrator. The forced omniscience
of V.V. can be compared to Saleem of Midnight’s Children. But there is a major
difference between the two at the narratorial level itself. Saleem is narrating a
‘memoir of his own life’ which is intertwined with that of India. The narrative
technique is that of Magic realism alongside first person narrative. With V.V. it is not
the case. It is not his life and what is being revealed is not intertwined with him as
with Saleem. Moreover, he is not an eye-witness to all the events that happen but is
given the 'news by his sources' who of course are his confidants and the news comes to him mediated through them.

However, this overwhelming presence of the narrator and the modifications to the traditional first person narrative, rather than giving access to all the facets of India, explores only the 'decayed’ parts thereby failing to counter the ‘popular’ notion of the East for the West. The structural modification in the narration offers a much larger scope to explore the ‘glory’ of India but, on the contrary, it reinforces the image of the Orient.

The glory of India, it seems comes from the structural affiliation to *The Mahabharata*. Critics have asserted that the modeling on the ancient epic is an attempt to pull off a lost *Ramrajya* against a corrupt and degraded modern India. They believe that Tharoor has juxtaposed the ‘decay’ of the present times to the glory of the ancient times when *The Mahabharata* was enacted and composed. It appears that the high-caste Hindu mindset that laments the loss of *ramrajya* of the times of *The Mahabharata* to a decayed and rotting India has mediated the text. The character of Gangaji falls on the same lines.

Gangaji has been projected as the leader of India: “A nation was rising, with a small, balding, semi-clad saint at its head” (*The Great Indian Novel* 51). Tharoor has shown Gangaji to be the leader not only of the independence movement but also the country. However, later he refers to Gangaji as possessing the quality of ‘shrewdness’ (409). Ganga, the saint and Ganga, the shrewd, do not go hand in hand quite easily. He is ‘shrewd’ but at the same time he is the “semi-clad saint” and the Bhishma of *The Mahabharata*. The portrayal of Bhishma from the Epic and representing Gandhi through him is an acceptance of the stature of Gandhi in modern India, as the father and a moral leader. But at the same time, the traits of the character of Gangaji projected by the author do not augur well with the Bhishma of *The Mahabharata*. The confession of Gangaji towards his death of not having kept his promise of ‘Brahmacharaya’ is a case in point. Bhishma as the leader in *The Mahabharata* dies faithful to the Pandavas as well as the Kauravas by carrying out his duties towards Hastinapur selflessly. More so, he dies true to his celibacy but Gangaji, in *The Great Indian Novel*, does not attain that sublimity. Herein now are three persons: the Bhishma of *The Mahabharata*; Gangaji of *The Great Indian Novel*, modeled on
Bhishma; and Gandhi, the father of the nation, allegorized by Gangaji. All three, or rather to be more precise, the first two and the last two are supposed to be identical but that is not the case. The Bhishma of *The Mahabharata* does not resemble the Gangaji of *The Great Indian Novel* while the Gangaji of *The Great Indian Novel* does not resemble the father of the nation, Gandhi. Bhishma lives true to his *pratigya* and selflessly offers his services to *Hastinapur* but Gangaji is pursuing 'Truth', his version of the truth, and the entire nation following him because it happens to be directed towards the common goal of Independence. Gangaji dies declaring his failure: “I...have...failed” (*The Great Indian Novel* 234) whereas Gandhi died with the words “Hey Ram” with his stature of a saint intact. The character of Gangaji, then, assumes a complex nature as it becomes difficult to define him in clear terms whether he is the hero of India, Gandhi, or an adaptation of Bhishma.

However, there are several similarities between Gangaji and Gandhi as both are politicians who monitored and directed the entire independence movement, and in the process also governed the party leading the struggle as its “permanent super president” (Aloysius 178) without actually assuming any official position in it. Aloysius holds that Gandhi “became virtually a dictator, for life, of the Indian National Congress since 1920” (Aloysius 174). The text shows Gangaji to be governing the entire politics of pre-independence India and the pursuit of his own ‘Truth’. Such portrayal of Gangaji by Tharoor in *The Great Indian Novel* as the master tactician aiming at ‘his own’ ideology and ‘Truth’ seems to resemble the one given by the Dalits. The Dalits see Gandhi as a shrewd politician and a racist who used the marginalized section to serve his and Indian National Congress’ ends. But it differs in a vital aspect. The Dalits saw Gandhi as a racist favoring the caste Hindus but Tharoor portrays him as anti-Hindu for his secularist search for ‘Truth’. This in turn shows the Caste Hindu ideology of Tharoor at play in the narrative. Ashutosh Mohan says in “Textual Politics in Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel*”, “…the Hindu bias of the author sneaks in the narrative in a rather subtle and superstitious manner. Not only the Gandhian politics of communal harmony and secularism is scoffed at, but the killer of Gandhi has been deified and rarefied. Amba Shikhandin (Nathu Ram Godse) achieves the state of communion with God which every Hindu aspires and endeavours throughout his life…” (49).
But even in this politicized figure of Gangaji, his relationship with the low-castes from the latter’s perspective has gone uncovered. This absence is pertinent in the wake of the statements of the low caste Hindus like Ambedkar who said, “Instead of surrendering privileges in the name of nationalism, the governing class in India is using or misusing the slogan of nationalism to maintain its privileges” (Aloysius 212). Aloysius further adds, “He (Gandhi)…deprived the untouchables of the advantage of additional representation granted to them by the communal award through an indefinite fast” (Aloysius 174). The reaction of the low-castes to the treatment meted out to them by Gangaji, hence, goes untouched in the narrative.

Structurally, Tharoor strives for the glory of the Ramrajya by presenting Gangaji in a political light and negating the reaction of the marginalized. His glorification of the assassinator of Gangaji, then, gives him that elusive victory of the ‘Hindu belief’ in him. But for the West Gangaji comes across as a shrewd saint and so does Bhishma as they are unaware of the significance of The Mahabharata. The West then, increases its conviction in the point-of-view regarding India that it is a land in need of a master. What Tharoor does is add to their ‘knowledge’ an equally ‘defective past’ of India thereby justifying their arrival to the country.

Frantz Fanon, in The Wretched of the Earth opines, “Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s head of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it” (161). The Great Indian Novel appears to be falling into the same category, distorting and destroying the Indian past. For the Indians, aware of the epic, the characters of Gangaji and Bhishma do not coalesce and for the West, the text, rather than highlighting the ‘glorious satayuga’ portrays it as equally decayed and corrupt. Tharoor’s representation, then, becomes as a continuation of what the colonials said about India in their literature.

Edward Said asserts that post-colonial literature explores “ideas, values, emotions, formerly suppressed, ignored or denigrated by, and of course in, the well-known metropolitan centers” (“Figures, Configurations, Transfigurations” 1). The text, at no level, appears to be raising this ‘unknown and the suppressed’ as the marginalized have no ‘voice’ of their own. On the contrary it distorts the ancient ‘knowledge’ an Indian has about his epics. In either case, again, the representation of the political
history of India reflects the colonial mindset at work. Kanishka Chowdhury says, “Clearly, Tharoor’s work is not ‘resistance literature’” (43).

Looking at the structure of the text, another thing that strikes the reader at the level of the political portrayal of India is that the entire political history of India has been reduced to the Pandava-Kaurava struggle. The Pandavas allegorize the Janata Party while the Kauravas represent the Indian National Congress. The basic outline remains faithful to *The Mahabharata*, with the Pandavas standing for virtue and the Kauravas, for vice. Tharoor has reduced the Indian diversity and vastness to this struggle between two groups. Ashutosh Mohan asserts in “Textual Politics in Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel*”, “The simplified normative mode of *The Mahabharata*, when applied to Indian history, reduces the power struggle between Indian political leaders of post-1947 phase into a binary opposition between Kauravas and Pandavas; the former as saboteurs and latter as upholders of ‘Dharma’...smacks of sheer political propaganda” (47). Either Tharoor’s point-of-view is largely limited or as Mohan says, he deliberately simplifies it, maybe for the convenience of the foreign English readers. This gives the text political overtones.

In this dichotomy and the emphasis on Gangaji, the text ignores completely the ‘common man’ and more so, the other leaders who participated in the independence of the country. Tharoor’s account thus becomes an elitist display at the political level negating the multitudes involved in the independence struggle just as *The Mahabharata* offers little space to the innumerable soldiers who died in the war. Kanishka Chowdhury comments, “As in the *Mahabharata*, where we learn nothing about the slaughtered soldiers...so in Tharoor’s India we learn very little about the unprivileged foot soldier” (44). For Tharoor, the entire political life of India revolves around Dhritrashtra, Priya, Yudhisthir and Gangaji with no or little space to leaders like Krishna, Eklavya and Pandu.

Independence does not alter the image of a decayed nation either and the wars fought by India against its neighboring countries, and the subsequent treatment of the army by the Indian administration amply reflects the apathy towards the “unprivileged foot soldier” (Chowdhury 44). “When the Maharaja’s accession to India was announced, a furious Karna committed regular troops to the fray to make up for the unprofessionalism of the irregulars. The first Indo-Karnistan War had begun” (*The
The callous attitude of politicians and the administration, is reflected, "They [Indian Army] were poised to push the uniformed irregulars and the uniformed regulars completely out of Manimir when they were drawn up short – several hundred miles short – by an inopportune cease-fire cast over their heads like an ill-directed fishing net. My blind and visionary son had decided to appeal to the UN" (The Great Indian Novel 260). The deceiving of the Indian army by the political class as well as the attitude of the administration towards the army is something that made headlines some years back during the Kargil War as well showing this practice has been continuing since then. Tharoor throws light on the issues surrounding India stunting its growth and stature after independence. Hence, it appears that Tharoor tries to rake up issues post-independence and this continues through the remaining part of the novel set in post-independence India. The failure of independence, then, emerges as the greatest tragedy in ‘his India’ largely due to the wrong placement of priorities by the leaders of the country over-excited at the prospect of political independence, the biggest failure coming in the form of the Emergency.

Hence, it emerges that the negatives and the ‘decayed’ aspect find a dominant place in the narrative. If the representation of the pre-independence political incidents reflect a culture and establishment dominated by the colonials, oblivious of anything thoroughly Indian, the same ‘decayed’ representation continuing after independence conforms to the colonial affiliations. Gauri Shankar Jha observes, “Tharoor claims that he has presented an India of multiple realities and multiplicities of truth, though the novel ends on a note of uncertainty with the narrator working up from dream to an India beset with uncertainties, muddling chaotically to the twenty-first century” (76).

The political representation of India, then, becomes problematic at the level of structure which shows a colonial mindset and point-of-view. “When an utterance which is narrated at the second level is not perceptible, this is also an indication of fictionality, an indication that the narrated story is invented” (Bal 46). This tag of ‘inventing’ is something that Tharoor has tried to evade in his narrative as it is the reflection of the ‘classical India’ he witnesses around him and based on facts. The political portrayal of India, extending from pre-independence to the post-independence era, presents an incomprehensive picture through the eyes of the Westernized upper-caste privileged Hindu. Kanishka Chowdhury sums up the matter.
as, “Tharoor’s historical selection which makes any attempt to recover the struggles of the subaltern finally irrelevant” (44).

At one place the text says in parenthesis, “Our diplomatic corps, Ganapathi, is full of sincere people who feel they are so out of touch with the masses they can only speak for them abroad” (The Great Indian Novel 399). The statement seems self-conscious accepting the text’s inability to possess an insider’s point-of-view. But the limitation of being an outsider has been negated by Tharoor as he projects himself as one who knows India. This creates a constant tension and conflict in the novel between the two points-of-view: insider’s and outsider’s, with Tharoor attempting the role of an ‘insider-outsider’ simultaneously. His point-of-view is clear from his words in his article “Globalization and the Human Imagination”, “…my fiction seeks to reclaim my country’s heritage for itself, to tell in an Indian voice, a story of India…How important is such a literary assertion in the face of the enormous challenges confronting a country like India? Can literature matter in a land of poverty, suffering, and underdevelopment? I believe it does” (Tharoor 88). The text is a poor and suffering India represented by ‘an Indian voice’.

The representation of political history in The Great Indian Novel revolves around two perspectives. First, it is a high caste Hindu juxtaposing a lost ramrajya to a decayed present. As a result, the warrior-saint of The Mahabharata, Bhishma, becomes the ‘shrewd saint’ of the 20th century, unable to sustain his celibacy. However, in doing so, he is also presenting before the West a picture of decadence that existed prior to the British arrival in India. The representation, then, only strengthens the belief that the colonization of India was indeed the ‘White man’s burden’.

Written by Kamleshwar and published first in 2000, Kitne Pakistan belongs to the genre of regional literature. The reason is more linguistic than thematic. The novel was originally composed and printed in Hindi. The English version came later when Ameena Kazi Ansari translated it in 2006 under the title Partitions. Both, the English and Hindi texts, have been used in the present study.

The choice of language here becomes pertinent. The text is originally composed in Hindi, the language spoken in a large part of India. This medium of narration assumes distinct political implications. Divulging into the ancient history of India it emerges
that English as a language was introduced in India by the British with the idea of ‘educating the natives’. G. N. Devy believes, “English literature was introduced into the Indian Education system during the nineteenth century. The British rulers saw it as an intellectual tool to be used to ‘civilize the natives’” (qtd in Parmar 81). The rejection of English as the medium of narration, then, indicates a rejection of the colonial legacy of ‘civilizing’ the natives. The text, by virtue of its linguistic choice moves on to the genre of post-colonial writings.

It moreover asserts the presence of an alternative genre in Indian Literature which is Regional Literature, “being written in more than a dozen living languages” (qtd in Parmar 81). Kamleshwar’s use of Hindi as the medium of narration seems a rejection of the ‘colonial politics’ practiced by the British to create a sense of hegemony. The British attitude is distinct from that of the Mughals who successfully imbibed India, its ethos, and its ways of living, thereby becoming ‘insiders’, unlike the British who concentrated on the ruler-ruled dichotomy rather than an understanding of the Indian way of life.

What makes this rejection unique is the protagonist who does not fit into the concept of the ‘traditional hero’ but who is most suitable for the theme dealing with history, its development and growth through the ages. The protagonist is Time, in the guise of an ‘adeeb’. He and the ‘ardali’ stand at the centre as the omniscient characters in the novel. The concept rejects the traditional legacy of a single and individual hero. Traditional literature has omniscient narrators but here we have omniscient characters. Though their omniscience depends on the hero’s ability to summon history and historical figures at will, they too can travel across time. This new trait in the characters offers a new insight into history and politics. The narrator, who here is the third person omniscient narrator, authenticates the characters and their voices. This is unlike The Great Indian Novel where V.V., in spite of his near omniscience, is unable to explore the different possibilities. Kamleshwar uses this new-found trait in his characters as an authenticating device.

Another rejection of the Western literary hegemony is the free movement through time. The novel moves freely from the present to the past and then back to the present. This resembles the style of the Stream of Consciousness novel but there is a vital adaptation: The movement in the Stream of Consciousness novel is mental, in other
words, the characters physically remain at one place while it is their thoughts that traverse time but in this case it is the characters who actually move to and fro in time. Moreover, characters like Babur and Aurangzeb are summoned by the adeeb to the present times and at other times he visits history. Kamleshwar, thus, in this way is able to represent the disparate voices present in history as time, the silent but consistent mover encapsulates every passing moment into itself and keeps it carefully stacked unlike the humans who destroy and manipulate history for personal gains. Kamleshwar’s text, hence, emerges as an impartial and unbiased representation of historical voices and also makes it more feasible for various voices to interact with each other.

Thematically, beginning with world history and the Gods of different civilizations, the text narrows its focus on India and the reasons for the creations of so many ‘Pakistans’ in the modern era, in the world in general and India in particular. In this way it attempts a political overview of the events. The Indian political history is distinctly traced at two critical points. One, Aurangzeb’s ascent to the throne of India and second, the arrival of the English. Going through this, the partition of India and the political scenario till the last decades of the 20th century is outlined. What make this political representation of India unique are the various viewpoints incorporated in the novel in the form of historians, history, rivers and even the spirits of the personalities connected with the events. This gives the novel a multiplicity of points of view regarding the existence of ‘Pakistans’ everywhere while the omniscient characters validate these points-of-view.

Historical narrative and literature, 20th century theory holds, have merely been partial representations of the social reality. In other words, history of an age has been heavily biased towards those who ‘hold’ power. The other side is largely absent or highly marginalized and neglected. The same holds true for literature as well. The literature that traveled through the ages in the mainstream is the one that was written by those in power or supporters of such people. Kitne Pakistan for once, assembles all the variable partial representations found in a large number of works in history and literature. What is important is that these are not portrayed as representations but one ‘voice’ among many that depict the incident from a particular point of view.
Everyone is free to give their own piece of truth just as Dostoevsky does in his works. As Bakhtin asserts, “Every thought of Dostoevsky’s heroes...sense itself to be from the very beginning a rejoinder in an unfinalized dialogue. Such thought is not impelled toward a well-rounded, finalized, systematically monologic whole” (qtd in Clark 242). Each character remains a part of the ‘unfinalized dialogue’ appearing before the reader as one aspect of the whole, giving the political scenario a new shape.

Not only are the various ‘voices’ expressed but arguments and counter arguments are also given wherein the different ‘voices’ question and interrogate each other. This makes the novel unique in the real sense of the word and generates a comprehensive picture for the reader without any imposition on the part of the author. Foucault believes history to be fiction as it is biased and presents one of the many possible viewpoints about an incident. Hence, in order to get a complete and comprehensive view of history it is vital to have different viewpoints for the same incident. This in turn becomes the first step towards achieving polyphony of voices in the work. Kamleshwar seems to have successfully presented the disparate ‘experiences’ of an event in his novel.

The writer detaches himself deliberately from the entire narrative by becoming the listener. He dons the roles of the ‘adeeb’ and the ‘ardali’. This imparts objectivity to the work. Kamleshwar, staying away from the narration just sees the unfolding of the events from different points-of-view. He stands as a judge but not as a renderer of judgements. Rather, he creates a comprehensive image and leaves it to the reader to make conclusions. The novel deals with Indian history starting from the times of Rama. Kamleshwar reflects various points-of-view concerning history and its construction over a molested temple and the reasons behind it. Thereafter he tries to jot down the manipulations or violence done to history by forces having a vested interest in creating ‘a Pakistan’ in India much before independence.

However, it is important to understand that the judge in the ‘Waqt ki adalaat’ listens to all the viewpoints and tries to testify the statements by moving through time and space. He stands as the touchstone validating the statements by journeys into history. No biases or impositions are made; rather the validity of the statements is assessed without zeroing in onto a resolution. The reader sees the different points-of-view authenticated through the adeeb and the ardali.
A very pertinent example lies in the three point perspective given by Kamleshwar regarding the political intrigues involving the Gods and man. The male Gods are on one side with their oppressive policies against man and the Goddesses, then there are the Goddesses against the Gods’ domination over them and finally are the men represented by the likes of Gilgamesh and Enkidu exploring love, friendship and escape from death for mankind. All the three engage together and Kamleshwar does not resolve the issue. Rather, Gilgamesh is still searching for the “Mrityu se mukti ki aushadhi” (Kitne Pakistan 24) while Prometheus is still a captive though ‘voice’ is traveling to the humans. The Goddesses, in spite of the rebellion are not completely free from the traditional labels and are struggling to break them and the Gods are still powerful. This leaves enough space for the reader to deduce his own conclusions regarding the ‘divine’ hegemony’ and man.

The critical point that emerges from the political representation in the text is that there is no proclaimed culprit or superhuman savior. The text leaves it for the readers to derive meanings, if necessary, or to just have the various points-of-view pertaining to a particular event. A very critical factor discussed in the representation of the Indian political history is that the novel also tries to look at it in terms of ‘absences’, those points-of-view that did not find any expression in the mainstream history or popular literature. An example is in the beginning of the text where Rama kills ‘Shambuk’, a Shudra because he was trying to attain Moksha, something beyond the purview of the Shudra. The political history silences or altogether negates such incidents and voices or even worse, such incidents that do not conform to the norms are shown to be anti-religious and punishable offences. “…occasional examples of those who did not conform to the codes and sought to gain knowledge or skills from which they had been barred such as Shambuka, who practiced austerities normally reserved for brahmanas, or Eklavya, who acquired skills in archery, a privilege of the kshatriyas…met with severe punishment” (Chakravarti 18).

The crucial part is the dialogue that is generated by Kamleshwar even in this representation. He says in the beginning, “Sabse pehle ye malum karo ki kali aandhiyan kyun chal rahi hain…ye vanya pashu vyakul hokar kyun bhag rahe hain? Ye hahakar kyun chal raha hai?” (Kitne Pakistan 19). He adds, “…jab jab is dharti par dharm ki hani hoti hai, tab tab ye kali aandhiyan chalti hain” (19). These lines
clearly represent that the event that took place was morally not right and a severe injustice was done to Shambuk in the satayuga.

Thereafter the other viewpoint is given wherein Narad says, “Dharmashastro ke adhhyayan, tap aur sadhna se Moksha ko prapt karne ka adhikar keval brahman, Kshitrya or Vaishya varno ka hai, lekin bhagwan! Aapke ramrajya mein ek mahapatki ghatna ghati! Uska karan hai shudravanshi Shambuk! Jo apne daas dharm ko tyag kar moksha ke liye sadhna kar raha hai...Is mahapap ke karan hi Brahman putra ki mrityu hui hai maharaj!...” (Kitne Pakistan 19). He adds, “Raja Ramchandra ji ne kshitrya dharm ka palan kiya aur Brahman dharm ki raksha ke liye Shudra Shambuk jaise rishi aur tapasvi ki gardan kaat kar dhar se alag kar di...ye jhanjavat aur kali aandhiyan ramrajya ke isi jaghanye apradh ke karan chal rahi hain” (19). Analysed carefully one finds a few important things in the narrative.

First, the story is narrated from two different perspectives namely, Dharamshastra and Humanity. Both the perspectives are given by Kamleshwar though he seems to be more inclined towards the Humanistic perspective. He says, “...Har daur apne kukarmon par pachtata hai...yahi kuch wahan ho raha tha taki agli sadiyan khud ko paap se bacha saken” (Kitne Pakistan 20). The Adeeb says to Ardalii, “Haan Mehmud...shayad pachtane ki taquat rakhne wali sanskritiyan hi jeevit rehti hain...aur weh jeevit sanskritian hi sabhyataon ke roop mein sthapit ho pati hain” (Kitne Pakistan 20).

However, the same description also reveals a different viewpoint. This also could stand as a justification for the event as it was a lesson for what should not be done. Rama, as the incarnation of God had to present to the people the right way of living and this was an example of what not to be done, a part of God’s ‘larger plans’?

The use of “!” the exclamation mark, raises certain questions. If one looks one finds that it is used in the representation of the God’s viewpoint and in the interpretation of the event on grounds of humanity. Narad is so surprised at the event,

“karan hai shudravanshi Shambuk!” “Is mahapap ke karan hi Brahman putra ki mrityu hui hai maharaj!...” (Kitne Pakistan 19)
The element of shock here creates ambiguity in the text. It could represent the socio-political scenario where a low caste’s attempt towards moksha is unacceptable and hence the shock as to how a Brahman putra can be sacrificed for the ‘sin’ of a low caste. On the other hand, it can also signify the shock at the inability of the high castes to acknowledge the right of a low caste to attain moksha. In the perspective of the text, it appears that the exclamation mark signifies the negations in traditional history and tries to ascertain how history has ‘hidden information’ out of bounds of the common man. How can a native become an Aryan? The Aryan theory of ‘race superiority’ does not leave any space for any aborigines in the higher places of their hierarchy. Hence, the attempts of Shambuk become a violation of the ‘standard code of conduct’.

It is critically important that this incident fails to find a major space in history and literature. Rama, being the king and the incarnation of God, cannot be a negative force hence this is not found in the popular texts. The existence of these incidents in literature cannot be negated as Kamleshwar’s knowledge of these is an ample proof of their presence. However, this presence has been negated or suppressed by the orthodox and traditional literature as apocryphal. This raises a critical question on the professed status of the religious books and God. Were the Vedas composed by Gods and delivered to man? Narad’s statement indicates the same and asserts their presence since the very beginning. This indicates the divine sanctity of the sacrosanct texts. But what has reached the present has traveled through centuries in different hands and hence there is every possibility of manipulation through the way. That this distortion occurred in the ‘satayuga’ itself indicates the corruption in the political history of India having ancient roots as against the idea that ‘satayuga’ was the golden phase in Indian history.

Coming to the Mughal era, there is Babur, the conqueror of India, and the Indian political history enters into another turbulent stage. The important factor here is the new insight the author gives to the arrival of Babur in India. The common and the more popular viewpoint is, “-Babur tum kis munh se baat kar rahe ho! Tumne bhi to Islam ke naam par ye kahar Hindustan par barpa diya tha! Itihaas ki ek kitaab ke panno se nikalkar Rana Sanga ne Babur ko lalkara” (Kitne Pakistan 150).
Kamleshwar gives space to the ‘other’, lesser known and negated aspect of Babur’s attack which is the necessity for a kingdom and a response to the request of Indian kings. Babur says, “-Nahin! Ye galat hai! Hindustan mere liye Hinduon ka mulk nahin, sone ka mulk tha. Tumhare Hindustan mein tab Sindhu nadi ki reti mein sone ke Zarre behkar aate the...tum to anpadh ho...Usi sone ki chidiya Hindustan par main kabza karna chahata tha. Mujhe ek mazbut saltanat ki zarurat thi...aur kya tum bhool gaye ki Ibrahim Lodhi par hamla karne ke liye tumne aur Ibrahim Lodhi ke chacha Panjab ke subedar Daulat Khan Lodhi ne mujhe sandesh bheja tha...” (Kitne Pakistan 150).

The words, “tum to anpadh ho” and “sone ka mulk tha”, in the above passage suggest the deteriorating trend in Indian civilization—from being the centre of intellectual and educational excellence to its becoming richer in material wealth. The Indian civilization was known not for its material wealth but for its Intellectual genius and that had been the trademark of Ancient India. But with the arrival of the turbulent political histories and internal conflicts the image changed to ‘sone ki chidiya’. India was already rich but it was richer in knowledge. However, later material wealth acquired more prominence as intellectualism took the backseat.

Babur defends his labeling as a Gazi Musalmaan and then Kamleshwar presents an image known to all but purposefully suppressed by mainstream history and literature. Muhammad Bin Quasim, raised from his eternal rest says, “…Hind ke Bashindon ka Allah ek nahin tha. Yahan har Brahmaan ka Khuda alag alag tha. Ek Khuda lut-ta tha to doosra bachane nahin aata tha. Doosra lut-ta tha to teesra bachane nahin aata tha. In halat ne meri madad ki. Mere samne Hindu aur Gair-Hindu ka sawaal nahin.tha. Maine to Hind nadi ke Dahane se Takshhila ke Baudh Brahamano ko Cheerta hua jeet-ta chala gaya…” (Kitne Pakistan 153).

Kamleshwar makes use of words like ‘lut-ta’ and ‘jeet-ta’ which are suggestive of the political scenario prevalent in those times. The political equation reflected was that of vested interests and “Yahan har Brahaman ka Khuda alag alag tha” is a symbolic representation of the same. No one was a permanent ally or enemy and even religion was secondary. It largely centred on the ‘desire for power’ and everything else was pushed back in its pursuit. Analysing carefully one finds that the present political
scenario, an identical one, is an extension and manifestation of that centuries old tussle for ‘power’. Kamleshwar gives an example, “...Rajroop Cheekha – isme mere liye sharminda hone ki koi baat nahin hai! Main rajput hoon! Main Hindu hoon...aur mujhe garv hai ke har Hindu ne vishwasghat ko hi apna jeewan mulya bana liya tha...hum Hindu us madhyakal mein sirf apne liye ji rahe the...hamara koi desh ya mulk nahin tha” (Kitne Pakistan 223). This is one crucial view-point in Indian political history.

Kamleshwar goes on to contrast the nation, ‘India’, against this viewpoint through Darashikoh. It was Dara, the son of Shahjahan and brother of Aurangzeb, who tried to give India its old form, one characterized by justness and co-existence for all. At one place Rao Chatrsal Bundela says, “...Darashikoh ki hatya ek naye bante hue Hindustan ki hatya thi” (Kitne Pakistan 163). Darashikoh is presented as the icon of ‘real’ India. This ‘real India’ is then shown through a web of ideas by Kamleshwar.

The discussion starts with “Aaj is beesvin sadi mein Aurangzeb ka wo Pakistan nafrat ki neev par khada dikhai deta hai aur mera Hindustan usi Pakistan ki abadi se zyada Musalmano ko apni dharti-putra mankar saheje hue hain aur samsik-sanskriti ki neev par khada hai!” (Kitne Pakistan 183-184). These are the lines of Darashikoh, the one who stands for ‘cultural India’. The division was a result of the ‘power desire’ on Pakistan’s part, and India, in an attempt to accommodate, absorbed the innumerable Muslims and gave Islam a new perspective, “Islam barbar vijetaon ka dharm nahin, voh dunia ko khoobsoorat banana wale sah-astivavadion ka dharm hai!” (Kitne Pakistan 184). This opinion of the Mughal Empire finds negligible space in literature dominated by the Hindu perspective of Mughals as ‘outsiders’ and cruel rulers.

“Mera mulk dunia ki sabse badi tehzib ka kendra hai...hamari tehzib ne lohe aur barood ke bhautik hathiyar nahin, atma aur Paramatma ke aadhiatmik hathiyaron ka anveshan kiya tha. Hamne dharmandh mujahideen paida nahin kiye. Hamne peer, fakir, sufi, sant, darvesh aur mahatma paida kiye...hamare junglon se....shanti-shanti ka sandesh dete sadhu-sant nikalte hain...” (Kitne Pakistan 186). India is presented as the ‘solution to the Wasteland’ that has been created in the world at different points of time. This is the ‘cultural and civilized India’ that Darashikoh dreamed of.
Both these viewpoints are put together in a tussle for supremacy with arguments and counter arguments but Kamleshwar very cleverly succeeds in evading from a solution. The debate runs through the British rule down to the present age wherein he becomes, directly, the ‘numainda’ or representative of the common public. He is a ‘voice’ of the ‘other’ in the present scenario, a victim of the ‘tussle for power’, the common man. There, as the editor of a newspaper, he offers his comments on the Kargil war and its implications for the nation. The long letter, directed to the Prime minister and the Defence Minister speaks in clear words the disappointment and disillusionment that has crept in the minds of the ordinary people due to the pervasive ‘power principle’ running the Indian political set up.

This issue of war for political gains is actually the basis on which one of the viewpoint of Indian and world history is based. “Hum bhi insaan ki aulad ki tarah masoom paida hue the...par satta aur samrajya ki spardha ne hume, apne hiton ke liye darindon mein badal diya hai...hume koi aur hunar nahin aata, hume bas maut ka khel khelne ka hunar aata hai...kash! Hume kuch aur sikhaya gaya hota,...” (Kitne Pakistan 185). Wars have been an endless part and parcel of history of the world and India is no exception. And the problem is, “yudh kabhi samapt nahin hota...kyunki...use samapt hone nahin dete” (Kitne Pakistan 185). These wars have formed an integral part of the Indian political history and represented one aspect of India, the sanguinary one. In contrast is the other perspective, that of the nation as a producer of intellectuals and messengers of peace. It is left to the reader to generate an image of the Indian political history based on this dialogue.

Kanishka Chowdhury opines, “The writer has to break out of a limiting universe with its own discursive rules in order to produce any oppositional discourse” (41). Kamleshwar creates a web of Indian history with disparate viewpoints and perspectives leaving the meaning to be deduced by the reader after going through them. The case remains the same as one moves along political history to the age of Babur and Aurangzeb, the Mughals, the Britishers and the post-independence scenario. In this web, the negated voices find space. The text, then moves forward from the colonial legacy into the post-colonial legacy where the principles and value systems of the colonial order are questioned.
Kitne Pakistan, then counters the colonial hegemony in representing the political history of India. The negation of the colonizer’s vocabulary and methods reflects in the use of Hindi as the medium, and in a narrative technique not adopted in the West. Moreover, in making movement free through time, the little known and largely absent perspectives of Indian political history are revealed through characters like Babur and Darashikoh. What makes his India unique is the presence of different voices and the principle of ‘humanity’ as the paramount value.

Published in 2006 and the recipient of the Man Booker the same year, The Inheritance of Loss has been written by Kiran Desai, daughter of well-known author Anita Desai. The novel primarily analyses the issues of love, women, gender, American Dream, isolation and alienation in the wake of one of the most turbulent events in Indian political history: the demand for Gorkhaland in Eastern India. Some critics assert that the text deals with the issues of migration and the world of the exiled Nepalese. Alan Cheuse opines “...major narrative strand....follows the New York city adventures of Biju, an immigrant worker...[and] indigenous Nepalese exiles, the cheap labour of the region, rise up to call an independent state within a state” (36). The text, however, explores a lot more than merely representing the demand of the Gurkhas and life of Biju.

The language used in the text, English, is the language of the Indian intelligentsia and the West and it is interspersed with Hindi, especially in emotional outbursts. It is important to note that the English used is ‘standard English’ of the West with Hindi used at some places. None of the east Indian languages have been used. It is different from the ‘Indianized English’ of Rushdie in Midnight’s Children who anglicizes the words in the text. The direct reader targeted, then, is neither the common Indian nor the native of the East but the ‘elite’ English speaking Indian and the West. Mandira Sen opines in “Strangers to Themselves: The Inheritance of Loss”: “Class, too, intrudes, as educated richer Indians try hard to differentiate themselves from the poor and the underclass” (27). Moreover, the language conforms to the Western style of writing, with which a reader from the West will be comfortable.

Language does not merely act as the medium of carrying the Indian picture to the West. It also serves the purpose of an active device in the text. The Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), among other things is fighting for the introduction of
Nepalese as a language in the schools. But there is a problem here too, “Why are they writing in English if they want to have Nepali taught in schools?” (The Inheritance of Loss 247). This linguistic conflict questions the intentions of the rebellious forces as no justification is offered for the use of English by the GNLF. The Gurkha perspective is largely absent and this deepens the chasm between the professed ideals and the practiced ideals of the political struggle. Only the elite, non-gorkhas speak:

“These people are just louts, and that’s the truth,...you know it, we all know it” (The Inheritance of Loss 247). The strained language also reflects a strain and deadlock regarding the political history of the region. “There’s no principle involved, Noni. And what it is this with the GOrkha? It was always GUrkha. AND then there aren’t even many Gurkhas here—some of course...but otherwise they are only sherpas, coolies—” (The Inheritance of Loss 247). The linguistic tussle between ‘Gorkha’ and ‘Gurkha’ is critical as it throws light on the political tussles in the novel. The GNLF is the Gorkha National Liberation Front fighting for a separate state of Gorkhaland. However, it is remarked in the text that the original term is ‘Gurkha’ and not ‘Gorkha’ which is an ‘anglicized’ version of the root. This anglicizing of the term, the root term behind the struggle, raises contradictions in the novel at the level of language and portrays a conflict in the principles and ideologies of the struggle. All these statements, again, come from the non-gorkhas, with no ‘voice’ offered to the gorkhas.

As a result, the characters get categorized into the ones who have access to language and the other without access to it: those having felicity with language and those who are action oriented. The sets are separate and do not overlap except in the case of Gyan. The former category includes characters like Noni, Lola, Sai and the Judge, while the latter are the rebels who are not individuals but a mass. Moreover, it is the former group of characters who are the representatives of the ‘common man’, the sufferers in the wake of the actions of the latter. The rebels, represented through the non-gorkhas, are the hooligans disrupting the normal life in Kalimpong and around. Again, the author leaves no or insignificant space and ‘voice’ for the ‘other’ in the political portrayal.

Language then becomes a weapon against the Gurkhas. What they indulge in the course of their rebellion is looting and plundering of public and private property. All this is done by rationalizing it under the banner of Gorkhaland, a linguistic corruption.
of the root word ‘Gurkha’. Any reasons for the linguistic corruption are not listed by the author but nevertheless it delegitimizes their claim for an independent state and their actions. However, on the other hand, the ‘corruption’ in the ‘standard English’ with the use of Hindi Language by the non-gorkhas is treated as normal.

Those with language at their disposal are the ones who govern the text’s point of view. Father Booty, in spite of being an illegal immigrant in India much like the Gurkhas, is welcome and his having to leave the country is evil as he has done some good to the region. “He’s done much more than you ever will for people on this hillside” (The Inheritance of Loss 258). Language also ‘highlights’ the hollowness of the principles so passionately advocated by the GNLF men as their actions don’t corroborate them. However, the Gurkha perspective has been given this ‘hollowness’ by the masters of language and not the Gurkhas. The use of language in the hands of the Gurkhas may have altered the way of looking at the text but it does not happen.

The linguistic centre in the text remains the ‘standard English’. At no place does Kiran Desai try to explore the shift of the ‘linguistic centre’ towards the Orient that has taken place after the colonial domination in Africa and the East was over. Braj B. Kachru opines in “World Englishes: Agony and Ecstasy”, “...George Steiner was actually referring to the pluricentricity of English when he said that ‘the linguistic center of English has shifted’...Steiner was not thinking of North America or Australia only, but of East, West, and South Africa, India, Ceylon...” (136). The text does not take into account these shifts in the centrality of ‘standard English’ and does not legitimize the rise of linguistic variations in English. The language remains in the hands of the ‘elitist’ and the ‘masters’ who will not accept transgressions in the standard order. The Gurkhas, by virtue of their inferiority, can distort this ‘standard’, so they are not given access to the language.

Desai has revealed the political history of the land of Kalimpong from this angle and all the other aspects of the novel fit within this perspective. Moreover, with language not at their disposal, the discrepancy between their proclaimed principles and their deeds stay thereby putting the blame of the debacle in the East at the door of the GNLF. Desai has presented the political scenario and its reasons from a single perspective playing in the hands of the ‘commoners’. As a result, the principles of GNLF remain largely proclaimed and not ‘actual’.
This raises the question of “power of representation” in the novel. Who has the ‘voice’: the author, the common man, or GNLF, the minority bent on becoming a majority? The answer centers on the debate of the use of language and its role as a mediator between the common man and GNLF. The GNLF has been categorized as the ‘other’ and the ‘power of representation’ lies with the other category of characters in the text. The text offers no space to any other voice, thereby limiting the presence of voices in the novel to univocality. The entire language and narrative in the novel is from the perspective of the non-Gurkha hence representing the Gurkhas and their struggle as a negative force.

The vocabulary assumes significance in the analysis of the political representation in the text. The demand for Gorkhaland is presented and then the author traces it back to the times of Nehru. “This state-making, biggest mistake that fool Nehru made. Under his rules any group of idiots can stand up demanding a new state and get it, too” (The Inheritance of Loss 128). Then Desai gets more specific saying, “And here, if you ask me, it all started with Sikkim...” (128). Analyzing the words used in the first quote, ‘fool’ and ‘idiot’, they are almost synonyms, words that can easily change places without affecting the meaning. Desai here invokes the idea that the very concept of having states was ridiculous and hence the mastermind of the entire idea too was no better. To make it more specific, she adds, ‘And here’, and then the daughter, Indira Gandhi is made the ‘fool’ who cleverly “swallowed the jewel-colored kingdom” (The Inheritance of Loss 128). These actions have resulted in the prevailing explosive situation in the East.

The thread has been held from here and stretched over to the problem of Gorkhaland. No other opinions are given to point out the reasons and causes for the rise of the Gorkha problem. Looking at the reason offered there also seems a contradiction. If Indira Gandhi and her father Nehru were fools then how did they manage to conceive such ideas, and more importantly, how did Indira manage to ‘swallow’ the kingdom, that according to her started the entire problem? Desai, then, asserts a historical fact as the sole reason for the rise of the rebellion and chaos in Kalimpong rather than exploring more reasons that could have created and intensified the problem.

In doing so, she caters to the traditional Western literary prototypes, the kind of literature that the West identifies with. Tom Wilhelmus opines in “Ah, England”,
"Her [Desai’s] roots, like those of her colorful and anachronistic characters, lie in the English comic novel and therefore project an attitude that might appear mannered and complacent in a world that gnashes its teeth over past humiliations and present-day wrongs" (345). The indulgence of Lola and Noni in Trollope and the BBC also reflects the affiliations of the text to the pattern of English Literature. It, thus, corresponds to the English literary style rather than undermining it.

Moreover, literature is distinct from history in its multiplicity of meanings and points-of-view. Sidney holds that history shows what was while literature shows what could or should be. This feature of literature gives it its many faceted nature. Desai debars the text from achieving that quality and her reasoning tends to make her text more of a historical document. In laying the blame on Nehru and Indira and at the same time questioning the demands of the Gorkhas, the text adopts a single point-of-view, “Those Neps will be after all outsiders…” (The Inheritance of Loss 127).

“But you have to take it from their point of view. First the Neps were thrown out of Assam and then Meghalaya,…” (The Inheritance of Loss 128). The problem in the narrative arises from this stance, “…you have to take it from their point of view” as there is hardly any ‘other’ point-of-view in the text: the Gurkha ‘voice’ is negated in the narrative. Moreover, the perspective that actually finds space here has no history. In other words, what transpired in the period between the decision of Nehru and Indira and the current crisis is absent. Only the immediate reaction of the public to the Gorkha outcry in the present scenario is highlighted. In other words, even the common man’s point of view is not a comprehensive one but a reaction to this discomfort at the disruption of routine work and fear for life. Desai reflects these in her novel very vividly, especially through the judge, Sai and Gyan and the cook and the neighbours.

Continuing with the origin of the current political crisis and its roots in 1947 one finds very few instances where the rebels speak. “In 1947, brothers and sisters, the British left granting India her freedom, granting the Muslims Pakistan, granting special provisions for the scheduled castes and tribes, leaving everything taken care of, brothers and sisters, except us. EXCEPT US. The Nepalis of India” (The Inheritance of Loss 158). However, it needs to be assessed if this actually is the voice of the GNLF or just the words put into their mouths. Comparing this with the reasons
attributed by the likes of Lola and Noni a very pertinent point emerges: both blame the politics of the times just following independence. Moreover, the point-of-view is the same in both the cases. While the ‘common man’ asserts administrative incompetency for the crisis, the GNLF blames the administrative callousness for the situation. Nothing more than this is given by the author thereby making the issue completely unidimensional. Moreover, it appears that the ‘voice’ of the GNLF, here, is more of words put into their mouths rather than an independent opinion of the GNLF. As a result, the Gurkhas still remain ‘voiceless’ and ‘spaceless’ just as they have been since independence. The political representation then, remains incomprehensive.

The East-West dichotomy is explored through the eyes of two generations, the Judge Jemubhai Patel and Biju, the son of the cook. Both travel abroad for totally different purposes, in different time periods and to two different countries. The judge goes to England for studies while Biju goes to the States in search of employment. The Judge goes when India is still under the Colonial regime while Biju goes as a citizen of independent India. Seen closely, one finds several comparisons: both were desperate to go abroad but the means they adopt to achieve this cannot be called righteous. The Judge manages the journey on dowry he receives in marriage while Biju goes on a tourist visa and stays back illegally in the country taking up several jobs and hiding himself.

The attitude of the characters migrating is important. “Jemu picked up the package,...threw it overboard. Undignified love, Indian love, stinking, unaesthetic love…” (*The Inheritance of Loss* 38). This action as he is leaving the country for England speaks a lot for his Indianness and a desire to get rid of it. Biju desires to go to America to escape poverty and penury back in India. However, there are vital differences here. The language of the judge reflects a dislike for the Indian culture and values while for Biju reasons to leave are purely economic.

Prior to independence, colonialism, and the subsequent portrayal of Indian reality by the English and the political set up may be seen to have portrayed this kind of ‘representation’. The anti-Indian stance from characters then was justified in a colonial representation. Jemubhai’s affiliation with the West symbolizes the colonial mindset, firm in the conviction that the native is inferior to the West. However, the
fact remains that he is an Indian and not an Englishman. As a result, on reaching England he is unable to communicate with anyone, and he enters into his own shell, "He retreated into a solitude that grew in weight day by day. The solitude became a habit, the habit became the man, and it crushed him into a shadow...his throat jammed with words unuttered...he grew stranger to himself" (The Inheritance of Loss 39). His Indian skin comes in his way. His 'brown skin' makes him evade the Whites of England and the lack of language is symbolic of the 'loss' he incurs in England.

Language again becomes a pivot around which the novel revolves. The use of language as a tool here can have two implications: first, the lack of language that the judge suffers from represents his isolation and lack of belongingness in an alien country and his inability to cope with it. What makes matters worse is that the notion of the Westerner's superiority is so deeply ingrained that in spite of his experience in England, he tries to act as a westerner when he returns from England to India. This alienates him from the Indians and Indianness as well. "He envied the English. He loathed the Indians. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indians, both" (The Inheritance of Loss 119). As a result, Jemubhai grows into an embittered man, unable to adopt the West and losing his Indianness in the process. Mandira Sen opines, "The judge is an embittered, angry old man with a terrifying past of broken relationships...Patel had come to see Indian relationships, culture, and dark skin as inferior" (27).

Secondly, it could reflect the colonial attitude of English being the Master's language which a native cannot use. This throws the text back into the quagmire of colonial literature justifying the superiority of the British and the West. The attempts of the judge at westernizing himself in India following his failure to do so in England reflects a desire to become one of the colonials. Language reflects that desire when the cook says, "They were a foreign breed and that hen laid more eggs than any other murgi I have known" (The Inheritance of Loss 60). The strain between the desire to be a westerner and the failure to do so by the judge is evident in the language. The 'hen' of the west and the 'murgi' of the east are at loggerheads with the 'hen' winning the battle for the judge and the cook as it represents the west in colonial India. Language, here, becomes a political tool to contest the supremacy of the Western legacy. The
‘hen’ of the West, a ‘foreign breed’ is more productive than its Indian counterpart who happens not to be worthy enough to be a ‘hen’ and is named by its Indian equivalent, murgi.

The narration depicts how the West has created the East and that too through putting words in the mouths of the people occupying a lower position in the social ladder. “…language shapes and constructs the world we live in and doesn’t merely describe reality” (Jochimsen 3). The language used by Desai does not so much reflect the reality of ‘productivity of eggs’ as it creates a world of the superiority of the West and the subordination of the East.

Moreover, she also depicts the inability of the Indians to successfully westernize themselves. Through Jemubhai and Biju she highlights the vanity of attempts at Westernization. In contrast to them is Father Booty, a Westener successfully staying in India and even doing some ‘good’. In addition, he is never devoid of language in India unlike Jemubhai in England. He is completely at home in India. This has twofold implications: first, that language for the Indians is elusive unlike for the Westerners who ‘command’ language. Secondly, it is the Western hegemony that negotiates the space in the text on its own terms. This stifles and negates a plurality of voices in the text. The words ‘hen’ and ‘murgi’ reflect that difference but only to showcase the broader assertions of Orientalism and its construct through discourse of “Oh East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,...” (qtd in Jochimsen 3).

Biju, on the other hand, goes to America on a tourist visa and stays back as an illegal immigrant. His journey represents the journey of thousands who aspire for realizing the Great American Dream, though in most cases it ends up as a disillusioning mirage. America, for Biju and the cook, is the land that fulfills dreams because it is the land of plenty. “Eventually Biju would make enough and the cook would retire. He would receive a daughter-in-law to serve him food, crick-crack his toes, grandchildren to swat like flies” (The Inheritance of Loss 17). The wonderful thing is the dream that he wants to realize through America. He aspires for a typical Indian home through the ‘great American dream’. They are not luxuries but necessities like ‘food’, unlike in the case of the judge who looks for ‘imported powder’ back in India.
Then comes the disillusionment, the failure of the American Dream. "...perfectly first-world on top, perfectly third-world twenty-two steps below" (The Inheritance of Loss 23). Biju realizes the futility of the American Dream during his stay in the States and longs for his home. "How peaceful our village is. How good the roti tastes there! It is because the atta is ground by hand, not by machine...and because it is made on a chooolah, better than anything cooked on a gas or a kerosene stove...Fresh roti,..." (The Inheritance of Loss 103).

The problem, in both the cases, is the inability of the East to emulate and master the West. The judge, still meticulously tries to adopt the ways of the West but his home is in shambles, as the Gorkha men reveal in their raid. Biju, on the other hand is robbed by his ‘own men’ in his native land and state and is reduced to stark nakedness before he is given one apparel to wear and reach his home. This may appear to be a countering of the Western hegemony but on close scrutiny, the opposite emerges. Contrasting the characters of Biju and the judge with Father Booty, an illegal immigrant in India, it is evident that he is at home in India: unlike the former two characters, he has no language restrictions, he remains a Westerner and has ‘does good’ for India. This reflects that the West is superior to the East and deserves to hegemonize men like Biju and the judge owing to its superiority. Tom Wilhelmus, in "Ah, England", says for The Inheritance of Loss, “Finally there is old, colonial India with its European and Eastern clutter” (345).

The sense of isolation and alienation pervades the whole novel and is in contrast to the only unchanging figure in the novel, Kanchenjunga. The mountain stands tall in the background, isolated from the turmoil in Kalimpong. It is the backdrop that does not alter with the change in the flow of the events. The novel traces the change that has come about in the lives of the people of Kalimpong against the backdrop of the never changing Kanchenjunga mountain. This provides the novel with the essential binary opposite of ‘constancy’ and ‘change’ wherein, just as in the case of binary opposites, the second is the troublemaker. The mountain stands like Tiresias of The Waste Land, a mute and consistent spectator as the events unfold.

The Waste Land reveals the modern age in all its nakedness and ugliness, “...when the human engine waits. Like a taxi throbbing waiting,” (“The Fire Sermon”). The poem offers various such examples of the futility and barrenness of the modern
civilization and the subsequent hope for redemption in Indian mythology. But one thing that remains constant amidst the changing times, wherein the world sees barrenness in the times of Oedipus, Fisher King and the modern age and its possible solution, is Tiresias, the “old man with wrinkled female breasts”. He/she is the one who has witnessed all the events that have unfolded through the ages coming down to the modern world where he has grown old, though he cannot die. The entire poem structurally is woven around the character and stature of Tiresias by T. S. Eliot. Desai, on the other hand, places the mountain at the pinnacle, the mute witness to all that has happened through the years. It has seen Independence wherein Nehru opts for a policy where ‘states’ could be created and then Indira “swallowing the jewel colour’d kingdom”. It has witnessed the growing resentment of the Gurkhas and the rise of the rebellion on the banks of the Teesta. The Mountain, just like Tiresias, holds the narrative together. But Kanchenjunga is just a spectator like the readers and Tiresias and cannot influence the course of events.

Like Tiresias, who, in “What the Thunder Said", watches the search for the Holy Grail continuing since ages which will go on in the future as well unless the “three DAs” are sought, Kanchenjunga too is watching the slowly brewing dissatisfaction breaking into a full-fledged trouble for the inhabitants of Kalimpong threatening their identity as well as of the subsequent generations. This will continue through Biju and Gyan unless a space is offered to the rebelling Gurkhas. The problem is that the projection of the Gurkhas is overwhelmed by the ‘voice’ of the ‘masses’, the elite non-Gurkhas, who govern language. The inability of Sai to cope with the newly found ‘voice’ in Gyan symbolizes and epitomizes the entire Gurkha representation.

The mountain and its isolation are, however, in sharp contrast to the isolation felt by the judge and Biju. Kanchenjunga’s isolation is the backdrop against which the events unfold. It is the pivot around which all the events, starting from India’s independence, till the present disturbance have taken place. It is the centre that holds all the disparate experiences discussed in the novel together. The isolation of the judge and Biju, on the other hand, is self-imposed due to their desire to look westward.

The text reflects a desire for Westernization and going to the West. The issue of going to the West is old, beginning with the pre-independence times to the present. The text deals with three generations: judge’s; Sai’s parents; and Sai, and in each generation
there is at least one emigrant. The judge goes to the west for higher studies because in pre-independence times England was the centre of learning and India was only a colony. However, for persons like the judge representing the colonized, English education becomes an escape from the trauma of being the ‘other’ in the colonized country. He does not cherish the Indian way of life but because he is not an Englishman, he is unable to rid himself of the ‘otherness’. Sai’s parents become the representatives of the Indo-Russian political ties and their journey to Russia, an escape from the technical inadequacies of India. Biju’s immigration to the West is a symbol of the escape from the poverty and desolation widespread in India. All three endeavor to escape the political, technical and economic inadequacies of the country in their own ways.

This desire to migrate reflects two aspects in the portrayal of the political history of India. First, the desire to be a Westerner stays in spite of the fact that India has moved on into an era ‘after colonialism’. The post-colonial era in real sense of the term has not arrived yet as the desire to adopt all that the West identifies with is strong. The selection of the setting in Kalimpong, a place with a moderate weather distinguishes it from the main India which is marked by a hot climate and humid weather. It is a colonial escape from the ‘heat and humidity’ of tropical ‘real India’. In fact, the mansion of the judge, Cho Oyu, is a cottage of a Scot who had left the country. Secondly, it explores, in an ‘independent’ India, the inadequacies that instead of lessening have increased over the years in that the poor man is still getting poorer even though technically the country has advanced. The deterioration of the scenario over a period of three generations seriously and severely questions the integrity of politics and political ideologies widespread in India.

*The Inheritance of Loss*, then, constructs an India that rests on homogeneous order drawn in favour of the majority. Ironically, this homogeneity that is being fiercely protected by the majority is being invalidated when the Gurkhas, the minority, demand it. The nation of Desai offers no space to the Gurkhas and to their argument. They are categorized as the ‘other’, the outsider in India, who is here because of the administrative callousness of the post-independence leaders. Dealing with the political history, the text also asserts the East’s desires for westernization and the inability of the East to emulate the West. Moreover, what ascertains the supremacy of the West is
the success of Father Booty in India even though he is an illegal immigrant in India like Biju in America. What is also pertinent is the desire to Westernize that is consistent through generations. The 'Great American Dream' to a life of prosperity and affluence against a life of poverty in India appeals to one and all but emerges as a mirage.

It emerges from the analysis of the five texts that not only thematically but at the level of form too, the issue of politics and political history is treated. While texts like *A Passage to India* explore the colonial portrayal of a colonialized India, others like *Kitne Pakistan* explore the ancient Indian political history in search for the roots of the present crisis from a post-colonial perspective. The language to explore India becomes the primary tool in the analysis of the representation of the political history of the country. Language, then, becomes problematic in the representation of the political situation in India. Moreover, if language creates truth rather than merely representing it, then India does not emerge as a homogeneous construct as far as the political history is concerned. Each author uses language to construct his own version which may or may not conform to the other author’s construct. Language gives political India diverse dimensions and aspects or rather creates variable Indian realities, all true in their own way, rather than a single nationalism.

It also reveals that the political history of India can be re-constructed in diverse ways depending on the aspects chosen. *A Passage to India* reflects the colonial’s perspective of India owing to the British nativity of Forster; Rushdie reveals the political history from the view-point of a West returned Indian, having equal regard for those Indian perspectives he knows as an expatriate and as a Muslim. Tharoor reflects the Independence movement and the workings of the Indian National Congress as seen from his perspective, which he believes to be that of an ‘insider’ and not of an expatriate, and asserts the authorial dominance through the use of a matching vocabulary. Kamleshwar on the other hand reveals the prevailing scenario in India and the world and tries to trace the various ‘voices’ in the past and the present that can throw light on the reasons for this ‘wasteland’. In the process, he gives voice to those points-of-view that are usually negated in mainstream literature. The last novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, reveals the Gurkha insurgency and the creation, or loss of identities in the wake of this turmoil. However, she fails to ‘voice’ the Gurkha
perspective and instead blames them for ‘pointlessly’ creating trouble in the peaceful land and goes back to history to find Nehru and Indira as the culprits. As a result the narrative finalizes the ‘Gurkha insurgency’ as a trouble and problematic without offering a ‘voice’ of defense to them.

All these representations reveal the diversity in the Indian political scenario prevalent over time. The five texts that have constructed the political history of India have chosen from a wide range of events pertaining to Indian politics. Several events have been discussed and represented while others have not been broached. Secondly, there are events that are common but represented variously by the authors indicating the significance of the difference of viewpoints. For instance, assessing the pre-independence political scenario in the novels, one finds it prominently in four of the five novels, *The Inheritance of Loss* being the exception which deals with the post-independence scenario.

Forster’s use of language and the type of narrative throws light on the colonial perspective of pre-independence India. The independence struggle is negated with more emphasis on trying to ‘unravel the Great Indian muddle’ that might have assisted in ‘holding’ and governing the country better. As a colonial, his narrative fails to find this resolution in either the Mosque or the Temple and hence the British here ‘cannot be pleasant’. In the case of Rushdie, he represents the events leading to independence asserting the fictionality of his work and his expatriate status. As a Westerner, just like Aadam, he represents a picture of India through his ‘outsider’s eyes’ but counters the colonial hegemony over life, culture and literature through the use of a parallel structure that defies the Western literary styles. *The Great Indian Novel* also deals with the same but the perspective turns ‘Indian’. However Tharoor does not evolve a complete representation as his narrative deals with the Indian National Congress and Gandhi only. In dealing with the ‘factual history’ of India, the allegorical significance becomes relevant and hence the Kaurava Party is the Indian National Congress while Gangaji is Gandhi. However, the narrative of Tharoor remains restricted to this scenario and the entire independence struggle remains confined to Gangaji, the ‘shrewd’ saint of India and the Kaurava Party. Tharoor’s representation strengthens the colonial notion of West’s superiority over the East. *Kitne Pakistan* also refers to the pre-independence era, dating as far back as Babur
and moving to the present revealing the causes for the present turmoil. The British regime becomes a part of those reasonings and has been ferried across as one of the several ‘voices’ in the narrative. The medium of his representation is Hindi, the language of Indians rather than of the West. The choice of this medium itself speaks for audience, the native Indian, rather than the Western English audience. There is no hero in the narrative but only the adeeb and the ardali holding court but abstaining from giving any decisions or passing any judgements leaving this task to the reader, the Hindi literate reader, a majority in India, thereby placing him at the centre of the narrative.

Given the diversity that emerges in the political history of India, the question what is India again comes to the fore. Politically, geographical dimensions and the national flag symbolizing the governing authority represent a homogeneous India. But it is also a composite of disparate experiences in its political history with each person’s experience dependent on his surroundings and cultural ambience. One may sum up in the words of Broomfield, “One of the most prevalent distortions in historical writings on modern India is the equation of nationalism with politics and it bears repeating that in the early twentieth century there was much politics to which nationalism was irrelevant or only marginally important” (qtd in Aloysius 53).