Chapter VI
CONCLUSION

No evaluation, howsoever favourable, can do justice to the writers under this researcher's spotlight as they are living—so the last words are far from in, conclusively speaking. With specific reference to the works discussed in the four chapters which form the body of this dissertation, the first, Khushwant Singh's, is truly groundbreaking in spirit, form, tone and content in portraying the human face of both the compassionate and ugly sides of humanity against the background of Partition. Its colonial/postcolonial aspect hits the readers' consciousness with such impactful force that the realities of the colonial/postcolonial mindset and psyche—in its very genuine rendering of the powers that be and most of their subjects' fearful and therefore compliant attitude—vividly and immediately emerge to the fore. To borrow a term from traditional painting in a loose sense, Singh's characters are "breathing" and, therefore, animate the canvas of Train to Pakistan. The first case which comes to mind is Hukum Chand's (the Deputy Commissioner) appropriative and acquisitive arrogance in all its postcolonial authority—particularly in apathetic exploitation of the marginalized to satisfy his own lustful hedonism, buttressed by the trappings of power. The Deputy Commissioner's proclivity to avoid duty devising "epicurean hours" is amply illustrated initially when he is just about to cohabit with a teenaged prostitute. But the sound of gunshots makes him softly curse as he is compelled to attend to official business due to a possible crisis instead of spending the night—his time of lustful and drunken debauchery as a routine—with the transient object of his then current love, a source of carnal gratification. Many tomes can be written on such official apathy where the supposed upholder of the law is a transgressor himself—
reflecting the very essence of postcolonialism's exploitative aspect. A few more examples, in short, are the arbitrary decisions and methods used to arrest Iqbal and Jugga, even to the point of signing blank warrants and hinting at the manner of carrying them out to the Subinspector.

The Nooran-Jugga relationship is the basis of the novel's climax. This could not have been effectively done without proper foundation of realism against the Partition background. The very fact that the two lovers come from widely different religious communities emphasise the pathos and poignancy in the novel overall – man-woman love becoming a paradigm of dynamism, in Jugga's case of an actively violent kind.

Khushwant Singh's fictional frozen-in-time Mano Majra (a microcosm of the sub-continent), despite the inexorable wheel of immediate history, reveals how the delicate calm, the delicate balance, the apparent lull was soon destined to be shattered as the best laid plans of men often go awry – man proposes, nature disposes. The men here are warm but ignorant – illiterate Meet Singh, religiously knowledgeable and compassionate Imam Baksh both of whom want and attempt to avert communal violence at all costs, throughout they being the living embodiments of brotherhood. But, power-wise, the real men who attempt to influence events in their favour are Hukum Chand, the Subinspector and their minions. Yet, even they prove ineffectual and are rendered powerless at the end – perhaps the scourge of their apathy and exploitation.

Chaman Nahal's Azadi begins on a comparatively localised scale but quickly takes on wider sweep once the fact of Partition and coming into being of Pakistan becomes hard reality. Psychologically, protagonist Lala Kanshi Ram has
two opposing mindsets – one of fervent nationalism bolstered by an unswerving faith in Gandhi and the Congress and the other of typically subserviently colonial worship of British (the coloniser), justice, impartiality, integrity and fair play. These two opposing states can be seen as a split in the personality – an illogical and very emotional denial of hard reality in its hard core. But the facts of the changed circumstances in all their gaping and looming horror, which soon take an active, violent form, beginning with Pakistan’s creation’s rowdy celebration by virulently communal elements and takes on monstrously threatening scope and proportion, soon gathers greater and greater force – unleashed as mass murder, mass rape, mass mutilation, arson and mass humiliation, the last targeted particularly against women – as the action shifts into and maintains rapid clip. The rapidity of the narrative is finely etched with well-worded and adept flourish of the pen which strikingly brilliantly foregrounds Partition’s grisly face. Starkness of etching in imagery of a mind-bludgeoning aspect, dislodging complacency, is a notable hallmark of the work. Remarkably, despite the inordinate trauma of Independence and Partition in which it seems there is a certain strong undercurrent of autobiography, Nahal should be lauded for his maintenance of distance quite evident in unequivocal yet objective condemnation of the principal communities, party to the fratricidal conflict as well as the colonial and postcolonial authorities – the British, the Congress and Muslim League and even humanity at large in its most gruesomely bestial shape. He portrays, therefore, the actual reality evident on both sides of the divide, both sides of the border. The postcolonial psyche and mindset is reflected and embodied in “The Aftermath” where the powers that be bleed the refugees for
purely selfish, material ends instead of rendering aid understandingly, and compassionately — brothers violating brothers. Even before “The Aftermath” there are many instances of authorities colluding with the communalists. However, Azadi’s major focus, thrust, and plot unwinding is that of Partition and its effects, Partition being the epicentre as well as the matrix.

Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children is the most original in style, form, and exploration of content. Saleem’s sense of displacement is evident right from the beginning, inherited from his grandfather, Aadam Aziz, both having extraordinary sensory powers. Aadam Aziz’s sensitive twitching nose makes him fall over at the very instant when bullets are fired during the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919. But Saleem, of course, possesses the gift of mind-reading and even mind-invasion, an instance of the latter occurring just once in the forcible penetration of English girl Evie Burns’ mind. This incident’s outcome — the accidental bicycle collision with the language agitators — directly influences undivided Bombay state’s history. Other such incidents are Saleem’s direct contribution to the coup whereby Ayub Khan came to power and his role as the amoral, somnambulist “man-dog” the buddha (old man) in East Pakistan (Bangladesh) during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war. Another important feature is the Saleem-Shiva relationship. Saleem, in this light, is an ivory-tower idealist due to his alienation from the very moment of birth and Shiva is the being of dire poverty, engendering a brutal violence in which people are thrown away (the callous mindless murder of prostitutes), firmly, therefore, of the throwaway mentality in which even humans and relationships are discarded without qualms. Shiva’s cynicism is thus deep-rooted. In this light his rapid conversion to
autocratic capitalism as a major in the Indian Army, a decorated war hero during
the 1971 Indo-Pak conflict is perfectly understandable, despite his previous
commitment to leftist ideology. His earlier political leanings are the product of
circumstance, the product of environment as is his opposing conversion to
capitalism. Shiva’s mockery of Saleem’s idealism is quite marked, explicit and
devoid of real ideals, he viewing wealth and power as the ultimate end to be
fought for and grabbed at all costs with no holds barred.

Amina Sinai is a woman of extraordinary strength of character, responding
throughout to her husband Ahmed’s debilitated non-functionality in business by
responding to numerous crises, the most important being secret and successful
gambling on the racetrack to finance the family’s legal battle against the
government to retain their assets. However, she is predominantly a tragic figure,
being saddled initially with an impotent first husband (Nadir Khan) and
afterwards husband Ahmed Sinai who collapses sexually and work-wise in the
face of crisis. Of course she does bear two children – Saleem and the Brass
Monkey, Naseem, forced to discard the refuge of Islam in its visible aspect – the
removal of the veil (purdah) – reincarnates herself as the autocratic and orthodox
“Reverend Mother”, implying silence as a potent weapon against Aadam Aziz.
Rushdie does highlight the freedom movement through the character of Aadam,
the sceptic and agnostic who has political idealism. One notable incident of the
communal divide is the assassination of Mian Abdullah, the voice in the
wilderness advocating Hindu-Muslim unity and the merger with the Indian Union
once Independence is achieved. The assassination is marked by high drama,
especially memorable in the leader’s humming when face to face with the
assassins. Though the end result is that the assassination is successful, the assassins also die. This event is characterised by magical realism.

Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* is the most ambitious literary attempt, its value somewhat, if not highly, controversial. Insofar as the time span covered, it deals with the period beginning from the 1857 uprising, carrying on till the freedom struggle and the postcolonial Independence and the postcolonial era and ending with the re-emergence of Priya Duryodhani (Indira Gandhi) in 1979-1980. Its most prominent features are the elements of parody, history and historical figures and events juxtaposed with mythical events and figures (of the *Mahabharata*) – all accomplished through irony, farce, sarcasm and puns. Throughout, double-edged barks are employed. In the light of Tharoor’s long span of time, the ambition of the work is evident but whether or not it will still be considered a valuable literary work is open to question. To the author’s credit, he does lay bare the mechanism of the power game in all concerned characters – Gangaji (Gandhi), Dhritarashtra (Nehru), Vidur (Patel), Pandu (Subash Chander Bose) and the Pandavas, and Priya Duryodhani (Indira Gandhi).

The game of political chess is effectively rendered, the reader being a witness to the fictional re-etching of the plots and machinations and their related ploys/stratagems. Colonial/postcolonial power is questioned in a novel light, the condemnation of all politicians, excepting Gangaji and “naxalite mould” Jaya Prakash Drona (Jayaprakash Narayan), being extremely parodic though firm as a historical and mythical counter-view. *The Great Indian Novel* is a story anti-colonial, anti-postcolonial counter-text which explores politics and its vicissitudes.
in a highly serious manner which parodies history and myth, the author charting his own historiography – a fact he acknowledges in the postscript.

All the works examined in this dissertation are more postcolonial rather than postmodern, particularly *Train to Pakistan, Azadi* and even *The Great Indian Novel*. However, *Midnight's Children* is equally of both genres, Rushdie having a place worldwide and therefore, necessarily in both worlds – Western and Eastern. This is chiefly due to his employment of magical realism and alienation and hybridization as a brown/black man undertaking the quest for roots – a state peculiar to expatriates. Rootlessness is an essential part of such - reflected and embodied in Saleem – heavily marked by alienation due to the impact on the mind of two disparate cultures which are so different from each other. The quest of Saleem as a character and Rushdie as a writer is for identity, they lacking this firm anchor. Nevertheless, it can be argued that it is more of a postcolonial document (less postmodernist) in being a protest narrative of the Eastern writer’s mould. At the same time, *Train to Pakistan, Azadi,* and even *The Great Indian Novel* are postcolonial narratives; however, the first two observe traditional form and format as per the general norms of straight narratives, observing linear progression. But all of the works under study fall into the category of postcolonial counter-texts.

Now it would be worthwhile to spotlight the comparative aspects of the four texts under study. *The Great Indian Novel* is a commentary on the prevalent state of fatalism of the masses, for the most part. At least in the sense of being vestigial, fatalism is also evident in Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal’s portrayal of the postcolonial psyche. But, largely, the comparison with Tharoor ends here. However, there is the valid shared similarity of all three, plus
Midnight's Children, being literary indictments of the postcolonial psyche. Of course Singh's work is a serious exploration of the postcolonial politico-administrative apparatus of exploitative brown sahibs whereas Tharoor takes a wider parodic view, underscored by epical parody, covering extensively both the period before and after Independence-cum-Partition with a vast gallery of doppelgangers/analogue mythic-cum-historical characters and like parallel events. Khushwant Singh's focus is intense and unswerving, the towering literary status of Train to Pakistan unmistakably evident. All writers under discussion comment seriously and meaningfully on both colonialism and postcolonialism. Khushwant Singh confines himself to the representative microcosm of Mano Majra, but is still more accurate in historicity though of course fictionalised for literary purposes and effect. Thus, he does not, in essence, deviate from the chronology as well as spirit of history even though his work has smaller characters instead of real historical figures, with respect to power. Nahal also is faithful as a historicist, his protagonist Lala Kanshi Ram being the most representative of the common man in the sea of the dilemma of Partition.

Rushdie may be said to be the most intellectual of all the writers and a great experimentalist of technique — employed in form, content, style and language “chutneyfication” effortlessly — all the more remarkable as he is highly proficient in weaving native expression with English. Midnight's Children is the most individualised in these respects.

Tharoor's craft is consciously cerebral whereas Singh's pen flows with the ease of narrative emanating from the depths of the heart and soul.
Azadi is a straight narrative with only slight postcolonial focus, Partition being the epicentre, unrolling through Lala Kanshi Ram and Arun. The novel is confined to the trials and travails of Lala Kanshi Ram and family and adopted family during their traumatic passage from Sialkot to Delhi – against the panorama of atrocities en route of a truly terrifying nature, often shaking the core of being, possibly in the sense of making a permanent impress on their unprepared minds, their faith in humanity to the very core, but lastly affirming the human face of mankind. The postcolonial psyche is a much more indistinctly experienced adjunct, comparatively speaking. As such, it is valuable chiefly with respect to the effect of Partition in a personalistic vein, though painted with firm brush strokes on a wide canvas. Nahal in Azadi is not cynical, hope being restored at the end. Protagonist Lala Kanshi Ram loses innocence but gains the strength of struggle in an existential sense. Arun is, at the end, more dynamic existentially, scared by the murder of Rahmat-Ullah Khan.

Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children is full of humour of a different kind in its exploration of initially pre-Independence and post-Independence till 1978, when Indira Gandhi recaptured power with a massive majority. Salman Rushdie does not play too liberally with historical events and characters but remains rather faithful to chronology, rendered, though in the form and realm of magical realism – a highly novel way of exploration, analysis and commentary on both character and events, which is unique in the annals of fiction – the reason it has been lauded as a dazzling tour de force. In dimension it is epic, which brilliantly unwinds, marking him as a major novelist of our times – the work being a damning, ferocious, indictment, fictionally speaking, of India’s
socio-political evolution since Independence. He draws on shocking and startling imaginative intellectual resources for his art of storytelling to the point of remarkable brilliancy making him one of the most significant novelists to emerge from the corpus of postcolonial/postmodern literature. This is all effected chiefly through the protagonist Saleem Sinai’s thoughts, attitudes and actions. In numerous instances Rushdie is surreal and thus resorts to stream of consciousness with great expertise.

Postmodernism and postcolonialism – different sides of the protest format coin – are nevertheless disparate in certain respects. Postmodernism is chiefly a West centred and West oriented response to the alienation which was born and proliferated in the 1950’s. Postmodernism’s origins are within the framework of Western history within a Western environment. It is a Western response in which there is a strong undercurrent – ever-present – of alienation which assumes great magnitude in the light of societal regimentation and horror, Nazi Germany being highly regimented for brutal ends of world domination. The 1950’s was an era when Western regimentation began with the proliferation of television, its moving pictures in the drawing-rooms of every household being divisive relationally instead of the family’s “electronic hearth” some sociologists initially prophesied it would act as. So postmodernism was and gathered momentum as a protest against the malaise of sterile, leveling technology negating individualism.

Postcolonialism is a protest against disenfranchisement and marginalisation on the basis of differences of race and culture, an outspring of the repressed and straitjacketed Third World due to colonials, postcolonials and neocolonials. The postcolonial writer affirms and proclaims the validity of native
experience and rewrites history in opposition to hegemonic colonial texts and discourse. The protest is one of native culture against colonial culture.

Postmodernism and postcolonialism, due to their intersection in time origins, do definitely share a common space in the locale of the time-spirit and contemporary weltanschauung of literature in all its breadth, scope and magnitude. In addition, both too, interrogate the grand or perceived perspectives on historical figures and events though each is rooted in its own cultural format, which varies widely as per different cultures. All the writers under discussion – Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal, Salman Rushdie and Shashi Tharoor – do not go against this very basic grain. They firmly reflect nativity without being parochial and thus reach out to and impact on readers worldwide. Their postcolonialism, viewpoints, firm counter-narratives and thereby firm protests, though differing in kind, still intersect and overlap and are valuable embodiments of the “brown race experience”. All in all, all four writers meaningfully comment from the “brown viewpoint” and they deserve a place in and on the global literary scene.