INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an attempt to study how three Indian writers in English, Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry and Shashi Tharoor, have used fiction in order to raise questions about identity and history. Through their novels that are postcolonial, metafictional and historiographic, they retell the past in a bid to reclaim the self. Each of these writers differs in their perspective and approach to history. Amitav Ghosh presents the outsider’s perspective and narrates the histories of those that remained muted. Rohinton Mistry looks back into the nation that he left from a diasporic perspective. Shashi Tharoor presents multiple histories from an insider’s perspective. These writers explore the issues of the self. Their novels contest the notions about subjectivity promoted by western historiography. Their writings problematize the subjectivity of history and account for the multiplicity of history. These writers have used the genre of metafiction to narrate the stories that have remained unrecorded in history. Those stories, which were often ignored and suppressed in the grand narrative of history, find a new voice in postcolonial literature.

The term “postcolonialism” is used here as a general term that refers to the cultural impact of colonialism. Historically, it meant “after colonialism.” However, as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin point out, “post-colonial as we define it does not mean ‘post-independence’ or ‘after colonialism’, for this would be to falsely ascribe an end to the colonial progress” (Postcolonial Studies 117). In The Empire Writes Back, “the term ‘postcolonial’ is used to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process, from the moment of colonization to the present day” (2). The dominant, colonizing and imperial culture interacted with the native cultural practices. With the imperial power establishing control over the colonies, there also developed the cultural
domination and hegemony of the colonizer. This led to suppression, repression, resistance, confrontation and transgression. Benita Parry and Laura Chrisman remark:

The post-colonial hastily compresses several distinct eras and arenas of colonialism and imperialism, individual struggles of decolonization, subsequent regimes of neocolonialism and neo imperialism, various post World War II movements of exile, migration and diaspora into a critical entity that effectively homogenizes differences of history and geography, place and politics. (1)

Post-colonialism has thus attained the status of a term that distinguishes itself as a way of reading and hence cannot be restricted to a particular period alone. It is an attempt to encompass a wide range of subjects and issues from imperialism to postmodernism, and from domination to globalization. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, “the term post-colonial, addresses all aspects of colonial processes from the beginning of the colonial contact” (Key Concepts 2). It is about the encounter of cultures and its impact.

When the colonizers left, the newly independent countries faced the aftermath of colonialism. They were left with an identity which was fragmented and ambivalent. The brutalities of the powerful had erased everything that was valuable for the natives. The culture, values and belief systems were irreversibly altered, leading to the conferment of multiple identities on the postcolonial subject. As Ashis Nandy writes, “colonialism colonizes the minds in addition to the bodies and, it releases forces within colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all” (xi). Postcolonialism aims at the process of decolonization. The act of decolonization involves a return to the past and a re-assertion of identity. Among the various means adopted for representation, the literature of the period also becomes a tool.
Postcolonial literatures deal with the conflicts between the ruler and the subject; the master and the slave; the center and the margin; the colonizer and the colonized; the oppressor and the oppressed. It focuses on the suppressed other by questioning the dominant culture and the established canon.

The postcolonial is not a homogeneous entity. As Mary Louise Pratt observes, “the colonial encounter can be read less violently as a contact which requires a novel form of cross-communication between speakers of different ideological and cultural languages” (46). Her suggestion that the “need for interaction within radically asymmetrical conditions of power invariably produces an estrangement of familiar meanings and a mutual creolisation of identities” is indeed significant in this context (46). There are mutual losses and gains in this process. Edward Braithwaite’s definition of creolisation as “one’s adaptation to a new environment through the loss of parts of one’s self and the gain of the parts of the other” can be a useful starting point (qtd. in Parry 70). The effect would be a new culture that takes up traits of both the merged groups. This merging may not be as smooth as it appears, as the inevitable power struggles, dominations and suppressions bring in a new identity. This is the reason why issues of identity and the quest for the self become prominent themes in postcolonial literatures.

The imperial, colonial, postcolonial and other developments witnessed a lot of migrations and displacements, which caused interactions, interconnections and blending of myriad cultures. Catherine Hall remarks: “the global changes of the last fifty years have involved the movements of people on an unprecedented scale, the breakup of empires and decolonization, the creation of a New Europe and new power blocs, the deconstruction of old nations and reformation of new ones” (65). This accounts for the change that happens to the “self” in the course of movements across
the globe due to migrations and displacements. The displacements cause shifts not only physically, but in terms of identity as well. As Hall observes, these changes are destabilizing. She points out how questions about “the roots and origins haunt the imaginations of disparate people across national and international boundaries” (65).

Ashis Nandy remarks:

When we speak of the connection between the ‘history’, ‘metropolis’ and ‘periphery’, we are speaking of the aftermath of many events of significance; its act of dispossessing and possessing; its act of constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing concepts and ideologies; and its ways of positioning and prioritizing the centre. (ix)

According to Helen Tiffin, “it is by refusing, realigning, deconstructing the master narrative of western history, by interrogating its tropes as well as its content that the postcolonial writers are able to recapture the notions of self and other as well as to investigate this destructive binarism itself” (179).

Hybridity is the result of the mutual exchange and encounter of cultures. Homi K. Bhabha links hybridity with liminality and sees it as a necessary outcome of colonization. Boundaries and clear cut distinctions are blurred in this perspective and the concept of an ambivalent existence is explored further. “Hybridity,” according to Bhabha “is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects” (Location 159). The hybrid, according to Robert J. C. Young, is “technically a cross between two species” (Colonial Desire 22). Hybridity too has its pros and cons. The colonized, under the impact of colonization, looks back at the colonizer from a different perspective. It is an effort to define the newly attained ambivalence and the “in-between” space. Bhabha remarks that “the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of
power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory” (Location 160).

Hybridity is closely associated with the term “diaspora,” a concept that has been subjected to scrutiny in postcolonial studies. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin observe that “diaspora is the voluntary or forcible movement of people from their homelands into new regions” (Postcolonial Studies 217). The term “diaspora” is etymologically linked to the Greek word “diaspeirien,” “dia” meaning “across” and “speirien” meaning “to scatter.” Diaspora hence has come to mean those who have been scattered or dispersed and displaced from their homelands. That would be due to forced migrations, immigrations or resettlements. According to Ashcroft et al,

Under colonialism, diaspora is a multifarious movement, involving the “temporary or permanent” movement of Europeans all over the world, leading to colonial settlements. Consequently, the ensuing economic exploitation of the settled areas necessitated large amounts of labour that could not be fulfilled by the local populace. (Postcolonial Studies 22)

“Migration” accounts for voluntary movements, and “exile” indicates forced movements. From the enslavement of Africans and their relocation to European colonies, we see the beginning of several diasporas. Displaced cultural spaces also can give rise to exiles. After slavery was outlawed, the continued demand for workers created indentured labourers from the poor areas of India, China, the West Indies, Malaya, Fiji, Eastern and Southern Africa, and Southeast Asia. Exile is not an issue of altered physical space or geographical location. The exiles are also produced because of the psychological effect of colonization and decolonization. According to Edward Said in Intellectual Exiles: Expatriates and Marginals, exile can be both “actual” and
“metaphoric”, as well as “voluntary” and “involuntary”. For Said these are “the nay-sayers, the individuals at odds with their society and therefore outsiders and exiles in so far as privileges, power, and honors are concerned” (52). The migrants and exiles long for the lost space and a relocation of the past in their new spaces. The diaspora is caught in an in-between space and exists as transnational beings that belong everywhere, yet nowhere. They struggle to belong to the new space, yet pine for that lost self that is constantly in a state of flux and transition. With postcolonial concerns like the issues of displacement, migrancy, diaspora and hybridity, the need to redefine one’s identity arises. Identity is in a state of flux, and can be defined only with reference to other factors like nationality, language, culture and history. This is the point in talking about nationalism in the context of identity. Frantz Fanon argues:

Nationalism, responds to the violence of colonialism by augmenting a vertical solidarity between the peasantry, workers, capitalists, feudal landowners and the bourgeois elites. The people that have lost its birthright, which is used to living in the narrow circle of feuds and rivalries, will now proceed in an atmosphere of solemnity to cleanse and purify the face of nation as it appears in various localities.

(The Wretched 132)

This paves way for differences to be ignored and similarities to be sought. But this also sees the repression of many groups, the silencing of their voices and the erasure of their pasts, leading to acts of resistance. The postcolonial literature becomes the space and voice of those repressed and marginalized. The rise of nationalisms and the still growing processes of re-examining, retrieving and revisioning the past is the act by which people assert their identity. Homi K. Bhabha points out how Fanon “recognizes the crucial importance, for subordinated people, of
asserting their indigenous cultural traditions and retrieving their repressed histories” (Location 13).

The hybrid existence calls for the need to retrace the roots and walk back through the folds of history to reclaim the self that has been lost in the process of the many transformations. The literature that has been produced in former colonies reflects changes in the social, political, economic, and cultural practices in the freed regions. According to Elleke Boehmer, “the urge to rewrite the past grew acute, when Europe represented the pre-conquest period as a blank, unmarked by any sort of significant action or achievement” (186). The necessity to construct a self arises in the postcolonial experience when the identity is questioned. The postcolonial writers hence seek representation and break free from the canons set by the colonizer and recreate the history that had been erased.

Keith Jenkins states that “history is the way people(s) create, in part their identities” (23). History is the recorded facts about the past. Alun Munslow, in the preface written for Jenkins’ work, defines it as “the narrative representation of the past” (xii). Narrative representation is the story of the past. As a story, it has links with the oral tradition of storytelling as well as with the several concepts of myth that link myths to orality. The etymology of the term “myth” can be traced back to the Greek term “muthos”; which means anything uttered by the word of mouth. Plato refers to “muthoi” as that which is not wholly lacking in truth, but which is for the most part fictitious. For Northrop Frye, a myth is “primarily a certain type of story in which some of the chief characters are gods or other beings, larger in power than humanity” (411). This aspect is common to history as well, for it is also a type of story in which the characters are those in whose hands is the power to control the events; and, as always, it is the winners who write history and not the losers.
According to the *Encyclopedia of Classical Mythology*, “the myths reveal an interwoven pattern of circumstances outside the control of both mortals and gods” (72). In the case of both myth and history, it is the weaving together of numerous situations and circumstances over which the people involved may hardly have any control. However, if history is more factual than fictional, then myth is more fictitious than factual. As M. F. Salat points out, “the interfused history and myth division is even more complicated as it has gaps that are being constantly bridged” (126). History tends to be less objective and more subjective. The narrations differ according to the perspectives of the narrator. Therefore, there is a possibility of having several histories. As Hayden White notes: “the long line of European thinkers from Valery and Heidegger to Sartre, Levi Strauss and Foucault have cast doubts on the claims of an objective historical consciousness and stressed the nature of historical reconstruction” (*Metahistory* 159).

In *Rethinking History*, Keith Jenkins defines history as a

... shifting problematic discourse ostensibly about an aspect of the world, the past that is produced by a group of present minded workers who go about their work in mutually recognizable ways that are epistemologically, methodologically, ideologically and practically positioned and whose products once in articulation are subject to a series of uses and abuses that are logically infinite but which in actuality generally correspond to a range of power bases that exist at any given moment and which structure and distribute the meaning of histories. (31)

This clearly corroborates the fact that history as such is an ideological construct, which is in a constant process of evolving and re-shaping. Further, the
techniques of fiction writing are employed in the writing of history as well. The selection of events, characterization, change of time and point of view are some of the techniques shared both by the novelist and the historian. Alun Munslow remarks that “history always conflates, it changes, and it exaggerates the aspects of the past” (16). The change in perspective has a direct impact on the manner in which history is recorded and narrated. Robert Young says that “history names the process of constituting historical facts and particularly, of their selection and a history that included everything, would amount to chaos” (*White Mythologies* 79). He remarks that “history, far from constituting a privileged form of historical knowledge, is simply a myth of modern man and merely amounts to a method of analysis” (*White Mythologies* 79). The postmodern novelists have employed this method, and the different stories that remained unrecorded get narrated in such metanarratives.

A postmodernist theory of history tells us that history invents stories about past events and foregrounds certain events even as it represses others for ideological reasons. Imagination plays a significant role in the writing of both history and fiction. It is through imagination that the historian makes sense of the past events and weaves some of them into a credible story. While White explores interesting ways in which historical facts and fictional stories resemble or correspond to each other, he does not believe that history and fiction are identical. “Histories are concerned with events which can be assigned to specific time, space locations, events, which are (or were) in principle observable or perceivable” (*Tropics of Discourse* 121). Fictional writers, on the other hand, are not limited to such events. Depending on the subjective position in which the events are observed, the perception alters. The inclusions and exclusions are made according to the subjective position of the historian. Some events are altered, some are exaggerated, and some are interpreted differently. This is what
makes the history-fiction interface nebulous. According to Linda Hutcheon, the works of historiographic metafiction are “those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages” (A Poetics 5). History as a narrative representation of the past in this sense is a method of analyzing the facts of the past and is a myth to those who read it. If the centre accepts recorded history, the margin finds the need to rewrite history. In postcolonial literature, history is reconstructed when the de-centered natives who remain silenced and marginalized dare to narrate their stories. It becomes the retelling of history by which the consciously erased presences seek representation. Stephen Slemon says:

The common pursuit of many postcolonial texts is to proceed beyond a ‘deterministic view of history’, by revising and reappropriating, or reinterpreting history as a concept, and in doing so to articulate new codes of recognition within which the acts of resistance, those unrealized intentions and those readings of conscious history as rendered silent or invisible can be recognized as shaping forces in a culture’s tradition. (159)

Young says that history “narrates the story of man; it places man at the centre.” But “the creation of man as centre was effected by defining him against others, now marginalized groups such as women, the mad or we could add ‘the sub-human’ native” (White Mythologies 110). As in history, in literature too “each new text whether novel or commentary both builds upon its predecessor and by a series of ‘paradoxical juxtapositions’ deconstructs the earlier work by recasting and re-distributing its elements” (Ashcroft et al, The Empire 152).
Both history and literature are hence seen indispensable to each other and are mutually dependent.

The separation of the two disciplines happened in the nineteenth century, marked for instance, by the rise of ‘scientific fiction’ or the rise of university. Before then literature and history were considered branches of the same tree of learning, a tree for interpreting experience, for the purpose of guiding and elevating man. (Hutcheon, A Poetics 105)

When the objectivity of history is problematised, both history and fiction become merely instances of narration. With the advantage of poetic liberty and imagination, fiction, when compared to history, can be regarded as presenting a version of the past. With the postcolonial urge to retell untold stories, history too ought to be rewritten. The fiction writers make use of myths, memory narratives, journals and letters to retell history, even as historians can be deemed to provide a somewhat fictionalized account of the story of the past using comparable devices.

Linda Hutcheon notes: “it is through postcolonial strategies of narrativisation and historiography that historiographic metafiction work to foreground the total impulse of western-imperialistic-modes of history writing” (Historiographic 65). Indian writing in English after the 1980s also falls into this category of postmodern historiographic metafiction. The authors of this period attempt to fictionalize the events of history and rewrite the past. The post independence era saw the rise of novelists who provided the native version of the story of the independence struggle through their writings. According to Amit Shankar Saha, “the novels of the older generation of Indian writers like Raja Rao, G. V Desani, Santha Rama Rau, Balachandra Rajan, Nirad Chaudhuri, and Ved Mehta predominantly look back at
India and rarely record their experiences away from India as expatriates” (194). This is what prompts Meenakshi Sharma to say: “It is thus important to consider Indian English fictions of the 80s in the context of both postmodernism and postcolonialism” (128).

The novels under study present aspects such as identity crisis, issues of migrancy and diaspora, and questions of hybridity, which are the prominent themes of postcolonial literatures. The dilemma of hybrid existence leads to a crisis of the self and demands the quest for roots. The past is rewritten in fictions using myths, memories, records, letters and memoirs. Many Indian English novels of the post-Rushdie period are concerned with national politics and history. The lives of the protagonists of these novels are found to be intertwined with the politics of the period. Unlike the rigid rules of historiographers, the creative writers of the twentieth century have the liberty to explore new horizons through the genre of fiction. These writers merge fact with fiction and use it as a technique to rewrite the past. As Linda Hutcheon states, “this is a kind of postmodern act where there is the process of making stories out of chronicles, of constructing plots out of sequences. This does not in any way deny the existence of the past as real, but it focuses on the act of imposing order on the past, of encoding strategies of meaning-making through representation” (The Politics 63).

Postmodern historiographic metafiction is reflexive and it asserts the relationship between history and fiction. It bridges the gap between historical and fictional writings by combining the two genres. Hutcheon argues that postmodernism affects two simultaneous moves as “it reinstalls historical contexts as significant and even determining, but in so doing, it problematizes the entire notion of historical knowledge” (A Poetics 89). According to Frank Kermode, “although we are aware of
that particular view of the world, about what must or ought to happen, affects accounts of what does or did happen, we tend to repress this knowledge in writing and reading history, and allow free play only when firmly situated in differently privileged ground of fiction” (109). This postmodern act critiques the objectivity of history writing. The self-reflexivity and intertextuality of these metafictions contribute to the concept of tracing roots. Hutcheon says:

It is part of the postmodernist stand to confront the paradoxes of fictive/historical representation, the particular/the general, and the present/the past. And this confrontation is itself contradictory, for it refuses to recuperate or dissolve either side of the dichotomy, yet it is more than willing to exploit both. (A Poetics 106)

A historian deals only with facts and events and focusses only on evidences and the chronological sequencing of events. The writer, on the other hand, uses facts to convey what he wishes to tell his readers. Historiographic metafiction attempts to use historical material within the parodic self-reflexivity of metafiction and intends to undermine realism. A work is metafictional, when it is inter-textual, self-reflexive, and parodies the conventions of novel by foregrounding and foreshadowing the narrative threads. A new perspective of the history of the repressed and muted is thus found in the writings where the author tries to retell the past of places and personages. Indian writing in English has witnessed waves of change during the post-Rushdie period. Salman Rushdie’s The Midnight’s Children began the new trend of merging history with fiction and experimenting with the genre. Rushdie has used magical realism as a major device in his historiographic metafictions. Pradip Kumar Dey states: “the succeeding generation of Indian writers of fiction finds in Rushdie a guru of the post-colonial times and more and more Indian writers of English show their
concern for community, nation, society and so on” (viii). It was an inspiration for many new writers to plunge into the realm of writing and experiment with the genre.

The post-Rushdie period witnessed the emergence of writers like Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry, Arundhati Roy, Shashi Tharoor, Chetan Bhagat, Raj Kamal Jha, Kiran Desai and Jhumpa Lahiri. These writers problematised history and proved its multiplicity and acknowledged the existence of plural truths. Their attempt was to reclaim the past of individual subjects erased from history. The untold stories of those on the margins of history were rewritten by these writers who used fiction to colour facts and narrate events in a non-linear fashion. A longing for home and hidden roots could be seen in the fictions of these writers.

The postmodern trend of breaking free of conventions is also found in these writers. For their fictions challenge and contest the established conventions of writing by using myths, oral tradition, digressive narrative techniques, and literary devices like satire, magic realism, irony and parody. Tharoor has said of his writing: “my fiction seeks to reclaim my country’s heritage for itself, to tell, in an Indian voice, a story of India” (Bookless 4).

These writers in their ambivalent existence attempt to trace their identity that is fragmented and scattered in the folds of the past. Their attempt is to trace the gaps in the history, which they found incomplete, and fill in the gaps with the voices that had remained unheard. Their attempt is to account for the different versions of history through myths and memories. Hutcheon says: “The eighteenth-century concern for lies and falsity becomes a postmodern concern, for the multiplicity and dispersion of truth(s), truth(s) relative to the specificity of place and culture” (A Poetics 108). These Indian writers find their identity and their past as plural and partial. Salman Rushdie, in his essay “Imaginary Homelands” has reflected on this issue. He says:
Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools ... But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy. If literature is in part the business of finding new angles at which to enter reality, then once again our distance, our long geographical perspective, may provide us with such angles. (111)

The authors chosen for study in this thesis are three Indian writers writing about their land in a cosmopolitan world. These writers in their novels have blurred the border between fact and fiction, and have rewritten history. They differ in their perspectives. Amitav Ghosh as a cosmopolitan writer narrates the waves of changes in history and gives voice to those that remain muted in the margins. Rohinton Mistry presents the diaspora experience and the need to trace the roots as a diasporic writer. Shashi Tharoor as an insider looks at the multiple layers of history in his land of a rich culture and a glorious past. Their novels dwell on the theme of the quest for the self. Myths are used in their novels to talk about roots. They retell history through memories and memoirs. The multiplicity of history is presented by narrating counter histories and tracing the voices from the margins. These writers use the genre of historiographic metafiction to question the subjectivity of history and negate the concept of a conclusive history and assert the existence of plural truths.

Born in Calcutta in 1956 as the son of a diplomat and former Lieutenant Colonel in the Indian Army, Amitav Ghosh grew up in East Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Iran and India. His family from eastern Bengal migrated to Calcutta before the Partition of 1947. As part of his degree, he went to Tunisia to learn Arabic in 1979 and in 1980 he conducted fieldwork in Egypt for his doctorate. After completing his doctorate, Ghosh
worked briefly as a journalist for *The Indian Express* in Delhi. Since then, he has acted as visiting fellow and professor in several universities around the world, while creating a bulk of work, including seven major novels and a large amount of journalism and cultural-political commentary in the form of articles and essays. His works of fiction include *The Circle of Reason* (1986), *Shadow Lines* (1988), *In an Antique Land* (1992), *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004), *Sea of Poppies* (2008), and *River of Smoke* (2011). His novels become a door that opens into strange new worlds, as he presents ancient cultures in a new light. They are about memories, history, displacements, myriad exotic cultures and practices, their divergent beliefs and rituals. His novels deal with the themes of the impact of colonial knowledge systems and discourses on the formerly colonized people. They offer a retelling of history, through which the author explores the third world’s ambivalent relationship to modernity. The restoring of agency and voice to people traditionally regarded as muted objects is a recurrent feature of his novels.

Rohinton Mistry is a member of the Parsi religious community in India. In 1975, he moved to Canada, where he lived in Toronto and worked for a bank. His career as a writer began there. *Tales from Firozshah Baag* (1987) was his first collection of short stories. Mistry’s first novel, *Such a Long Journey* (1991), brought him national and international recognition. His other works include *A Fine Balance* (1995) and *Family Matters* (2002). Mistry is known for his sensitivity in presenting diasporic concerns, cultural issues, minority matters and cosmopolitan issues that are important in a fast changing world. He also addresses the issues of immigration, especially of immigration to Canada, and the difficulty that immigrants face in a strange society. Mistry deals with the issues of homeland and political memory.
through his fictions. His memory narrative becomes the re-creation of a nation by an immigrant dweller. His novels mainly focus on Bombay. The feeling of being left out of the cultural mainstream is uniquely reflected in the way Mistry's characters are displaced and are consistently searching for a new identity.

Born in London and educated in Bombay and Calcutta, Shashi Tharoor spent his school vacations in his ancestral village in Kerala. Alongside his career as a UN diplomat, Tharoor has exercised his talent as a writer. He is the author of three novels and a collection of short stories. Tharoor has also written many works of non-fiction and is a frequent contributor to magazines and newspapers. His books of fiction include The Great Indian Novel (1989), Show Business (1991) and The Riot (2001). Shashi Tharoor revisits the past from the insider’s point of view through a deployment of myths, legends and memories that he integrates into his fiction. Nostalgic memories that reconstruct the fragmented self of the writer recur in his novels. His novels revolve around the themes of identity, displacement and a nostalgia for home. Shashi Tharoor discusses the plight of the expatriate and explores the expatriate’s need to define the self. According to him, “the expatriate’s nostalgia is based on the selectiveness of memory; it is a simplified, idealized recollection of his roots” (India from Midnight 142). His novels depict the recollection of the personal past in the shadow of the nation’s history.

The dissertation, in addition to the “Introduction” and the “Conclusion,” consists of four chapters. Chapter I titled “In Search of the Self” explores the quest for the self, a recurrent theme in contemporary Indian English writing. The novels present the identity crisis of the migrant characters in their ambivalent hybrid existences. The chapter provides an analysis of the selected novels of the three authors on this theme.
Chapter II titled “Return to the Mythical Roots” explores how these writers use myths to reorder the past. The postmodern attempt at reviving myths and legends as counter histories is examined. This chapter explores how myths are seen as the unwritten records of the past. The myths traced through the narration are presented as other histories or as little stories.

Chapter III, “Retelling History” focuses on how the selected authors have incorporated history into their novels. The use of memories and memoirs in retelling history is analyzed. History gets retold from a different perspective and the objectivity of the grand narrative of history is questioned.

Chapter IV titled “History as Metafiction” is a study of how the three authors have used the genre of historiographic metafiction in their works. The novels are considered as metafictions that retell history. The multiplicity of history and the notion of plural truths are explored and analyzed in order to trace the features of the genre. The chapter discusses how the act of historiography is problematised and the culture’s polyphony is represented in the fiction of these writers.

The concluding chapter indicates how the three writers bring about a remarkable change in the tone and texture of contemporary Indian English writing. Summarising the arguments, it points out how Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry and Shashi Tharoor problematise the concept of the self through their fiction. It discusses how these writers make use of historiographic metafiction to question the grand narrative of history and argue for the existence of plural truths.