CONCLUSION

Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry and Shashi Tharoor belong to the post-Rushdie period in Indian English literature. Unlike the earlier generations of Indian English writers who attempt a realistic depiction of life, these contemporary writers develop modes of narration that go beyond realism in order to raise questions about self and history. They portray in their fictions the world with its complexities and ambiguities. The contemporary world of globalization and multiculturalism has contributed to a rise in the number of unhomed, rootless people existing on the margins of society. The displaced migrants, exiles and expatriates who grapple with partial and plural identities demand a retelling of history that would facilitate a redefinition of their self. The preceding chapters have argued that identity is not a concrete entity, but is in a state of constant flux. The writers discussed here attempt to construct a self for themselves through the retelling of history and problematise the objective nature of received history.

The present-day Indian English writers often combine aspects of postcolonialism with trends in postmodernism and create a space of their own in the cosmopolitan world of literature. They represent their hybrid existence and the related anguish and other concerns in their novels. Paul Gilroy states that hybridity is “the intercultural and transnational formation which provides a means to re-examine the problems of nationality, location, identity and historical memory” (16). The hybrid existences of the displaced migrants problematise the issues of identity and history. They re-examine the issues of identity and history with the help of the principles of historiographic metafiction that some of them employ in their writing. They acknowledge the presence of the marginalized in their retelling of the past.
According to Robert J. C. Young, “Hybridity is connected to multiculturalism, a discourse that celebrates diversity rather than hybridized merger of one culture with another” (Colonial Desire 22). This heterogeneity is emphasized by these writers. The deterministic view of history is questioned and the narratives are deconstructed in their novels and are replaced with the narration of stories from the margins. Their metafictions portray the multicultural and multilingual world of plural truths that they inhabit. The borders between fact and fantasy, myth and reality and history and fiction are blurred in their novels. The genres are combined, myths are retold, memories are recollected and history is rewritten in them. The retelling of history acknowledges the multiplicity of history which contests the conclusive nature of colonial history. The necessity to present plural truths is recognized. Historiographic metafiction is the mode utilized by Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry and Shashi Tharoor to present the multiple perspectives of history and establish the plurality of truth.

A perusal of the novels of Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry and Shashi Tharoor would reveal that Homi K. Bhabha’s perception of the ambiguous, interstitial position occupied by the hybrid caught between the split of the self and the other makes a lot of sense in relation to them. The quest for the self becomes quintessential in the liminal existence of the colonised. Fanon’s concept of the desire of the self for the other is realized through the characters portrayed in these novels. It is the past that gives meaning to the present. The constantly transforming self can be defined only in relation to the past. Myths and legends facilitate connections with the past and the pursuit of the self leads to a return to one’s mythical roots. Myths epitomize the culture and tradition and are juxtaposed to recorded history. The fixity of colonial historiography is disputed when the margins claim representation. The retrieval of the past using myths, memories and memoirs becomes integral to counter histories.
Of the three writers, Amitav Ghosh combines ethnography, anthropology, history and fiction to present the transactions of the global world and its multiculturalism. Ghosh presents the various kinds of displacements that lead to the creation of hybrid existences. His protagonists, presented with partial and plural identities, grapple in a chaotic world of uncertainties and ambiguities. Rootless and unhomed, these characters struggle to come to terms with their transformations and displacements. Rohinton Mistry presents the life of the doubly displaced minority community that survives in a multicultural world. The agony of migration and the struggle to adapt to historical changes are underscored in his works. The retelling of the cultural past through the novels provides the basis for a reclaiming of the self. The postmodern traits of self-reflexivity and intertextuality are important aspects of Mistry’s fictions. Shashi Tharoor’s novels problematise the notion of history and identity. He points to the multiplicity of history and the need to consider plural truths. His works portray both identity and history as constructed entities that alter constantly. The recollection of the personal past from fragmented memories provides occasions for the retrieval of history. The revival of myths and the recapturing of traditional narrative methods lead to a subversion of historiography and experimentation with new genres in Tharoor’s novels. The aspects of parody, intertextuality, irony and satire are employed in his novels to problematise the subjectivity of history.

The self in a process of transformation seeks representation in many of the novels. Amitav Ghosh presents the hybrid existences that are created through various kinds of displacements. His characters vary from exiles, migrant labourers, deported rulers, refugees of wars, indentured labourers, and victims of caste and racial discrimination to hybrids of miscegenation who are caught in interstitial and
ambiguous positions. The characters of his first novel *The Circle of Reason* are partial and plural identities who struggle with the transformations they are forced to make. In *The Shadow Lines*, the author focuses on the borderlines that are drawn to distinguish the self and the other. The dichotomy of the East and the West becomes the self and the other in *The Calcutta Chromosome*, where the scientific reason of the West is placed against the traditional knowledge of the East. *In an Antique Land* presents the issues of identity through the migrant experience of the various characters. The antique land with its rich culture is placed against the westernized world. The characters in *The Glass Palace* are also plural identities, who struggle in the waves of change. *The Hungry Tide* presents the constantly changing identities of a land and its people. The assertion of the self becomes necessary to find a meaning for the existence of the characters in that novel too. *Sea of Poppies* presents the tale of the creation of the first generation of migrants. The diaspora life and the struggle to cope with the changes and adapt to transformations are depicted in *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke*.

Rohinton Mistry limits his concern to the diasporic angst of the Parsi community that strives to maintain its ethnic identity. The characters in *Tales from Firozsha Baag* represent the changing attitude of generations within the community. The insecurities that haunt the existence of a minority group in a multicultural world prompt the writer to go in pursuit of his cultural self. Gustad Noble of *Such a Long Journey* also faces this crisis of being the other. In *A Fine Balance* the identity of the nation is presented as in crisis with the declaration of the Emergency and the ruler turning tyrant. The life of the subaltern and the marginalized in the period of political turmoil is portrayed in this novel. The struggle to claim the self is seen in all the characters that exist as displaced and rootless migrants. The eroding identity of the
city of Mumbai and its myriad population whose lives are torn by communal violence are depicted in *Family Matters* that focuses on the struggles of a middle class Parsi family in Mumbai. Shashi Tharoor’s novels also deal with the question of plural and partial identities. *The Great Indian Novel* is an attempt to prove the greatness of the nation to those who regard it as an underdeveloped country. *Show Business* portrays the crisis of identity of a Bollywood hero. Multiple narrations are used to construct the identity of the protagonist in this novel. *Riot* also looks at the construction of identity through fragmented narrations. The novels assert the need to seek the self in ambiguous and hybrid contexts.

The post-Rushdie writers rewrite history and narrate the past from a different perspective. Myths are seen as treasure houses of culture and traditions. Retelling the past through myths and legends becomes a revival of the oral tradition. Myths are altered in narration. Such alterations can lead to contestations of historiography and conventional modes of fiction writing. Amitav Ghosh’s *The Circle of Reason* utilizes the myth of Nachiketa and the legends of Chitrangada. The Valentinian cosmology and its deities Abyss and Silence appear in *The Calcutta Chromosome*. The Sufi myths connected with the Huma bird and the Bhuta cult worship are mentioned in *In an Antique Land*. *The Glass Palace* incorporates sermons from Buddhist texts. The local myth of Bonbibi and the legends around it are narrated in *The Hungry Tide*. The myth of Shiva’s taming of Ganges is associated with the origin of the Sundarbans. The myth of Bonbibi alludes to the cordial relation between the Muslims and Hindus. The novel also has myths connected to dolphins like that of Oceanus and Tethys from the Greek mythology. *Sea of Poppies* revives the myths connected with the poppy flower. *River of Smoke* incorporates myths concerning the origin of Sati, those connected with the winds. It also revives myths about Ganesha, Ma-zu, the Chinese
goddess, Ibis the Egyptian bird, and about Ahura Majda and Ahriman from the Zoroastrian faith.

Myths are used in Mistry’s novels to preserve cultural identity. In *Such a Long Journey* the Roman myths of the double faced goddess Janus as well as the legends about St. Thomas and St. George are recounted. There are references to the biblical tale of Cain and Abel, and of Absalom, the son of David in this novel. The Persian legends of Sisyphus and Zuhaak are narrated in *Family Matters*. The legend of Rustom and Sohrab is narrated along with the legends connected with Zarathustra in the novel.

Tharoor too revives the tradition of oral narration in *The Great Indian Novel*. The epic *Mahabharata* that is retold as a political satire has many mythological characters in it, ranging from Ganesha and Vyasa to the members of the Pandava and the Kaurava clans. The novel *Show Business* revolves around the myths that have developed in Bollywood. It ridicules the idolization of celebrities in India. In *Riot* Tharoor presents the different versions of the myth of Rama and Sita and explores how myths are altered in different cultures.

In order to re-interpret the past, the writers have made ample use of letters, manuscripts, memoirs and memories that are integrated into their narration. This turns their fictions into counter histories narrated from multiple perspectives. Another question that has been discussed in these pages is the intricate relation between personal history and national history. Ghosh has tried to trace the histories that went unnoticed by historiographers. His fictions become a narration of such histories. In *The Circle of Reason* the narration of the adventures of Alu becomes a narration of multiple histories. It traces the history of weaving and Indian cotton from I500 AD and also the movement of man from the looms to machines, and from punching cards...
to modern computers. The history and development of scientific reason is also narrated in the novel. The novel, through the memories of its characters, also presents the history of India’s campus politics in the 1930s. The other historical events mentioned in the novel include the return of Mahatma Gandhi from Africa, the Simon Commission, the British annexation of Burma, the recruitment of Indian soldiers in British regiments, the formation of the Indian National Congress, the Socialist Congress that took place in Meerut, the Gulf migrations that began in the 1970s and the formation of the Algerian nationalist movement. In *The Shadow Lines*, the narrator employs the memories of the characters to recount such historical events as the World Wars, the Anti Nazi movements, the Hazrat Bal incident, the Indo-Pak test matches, the Calcutta-Khulna riots and the Indo-Sino War. Ghosh’s multi-generic text *In an Antique Land* reiterates the history of the Indian Ocean trade and uses the Geniza documents as evidence of historical events like the Synagogue reconstruction of 1025 AD, the crusader army conquest of Egypt in 1148 AD and the plundering of knowledge by the West which began in 1752. The history of the construction of Suez Canal, the revolution in Egypt, the migrations to Iraq and the Iraq wars are also described in the novel. The colonial history of British India and the history of malaria research are narrated in *The Calcutta Chromosome*. In *The Glass Palace*, the author retells events of historical significance such as the reign of King Mandin of Burma, the British annexation of Burma in 1852, the “Sepoy Mutiny” of India in 1885, the invention of the motor wagon by Karl Benz, the plague in India in 1896, the Japanese invasion of 1942, the Second World War and the rise of Burmese democracy led by Aung San Syu Ki in 1996. In *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh presents the massacre of the Morichjhapi settlers in 1979 from multiple perspectives. The novel renders the history of Sundarbans, the history of research on aquatic mammals and the history of socialist
movements in Calcutta. The history of poppy cultivation and the opium trade in India and the history of the migration of indentured labourers to British colonies are recalled in *Sea of Poppies*. In *River of Smoke* the history of the opium trade in China and its prohibition that led to the opium wars of 1838 are recounted.

A minority perspective on historical events is presented in the novels of Rohinton Mistry. The life of the Parsis of Bombay of the 1980s is portrayed in *Tales from Firozshah Baag*. *Such a Long Journey* recalls the Nagarwala case, the nationalization of banks, the Indi-China War of 1964 and the Indo-Pak War of 1971. In *A Fine Balance*, the events leading to the declaration of the Emergency in India, the subsequent elections and the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the MISA regulations, the family planning propaganda and the controversy surrounding the affairs of the Coca-Cola company are recalled. In *Family Matters*, the author recalls the Mumbai of the 1990s reeling in communal violence, bombings and the demand for a separate Maratha state by the Shiv Sainiks.

Tharoor’s novels also retell history. *The Great Indian Novel* is a satirized political history of post-Independence India and reiterates historical events such as the Dandi March, the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre, the Quit India Movement, the Partition, and the making of Pakistan. *Show Business* recreates the world of Bollywood cinema through a parodic representation of the actors and movies of the period. *Riot* provides a multiple perspective on the history of communal riots in India and retells the events connected with the *Ram Sita Pooja* that led to the Ayodhya tragedy. The novel recounts the rivalry between the Coca-Cola and Pepsi companies, the FERA rules that banned production by the Coca-Cola Company in 1968, the Shah Banu case that demanded minority protection, the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the Sikh riots that followed in 1984.
Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry and Shashi Tharoor experiment with genres and use historiographic metafiction as a method to present this multiplicity of history. Through subjective interpretations of history, these writers provide multiple perspectives on historical events. The novels taken for study employ fragmented memories, myths, legends, letters, photographs and journals as multiple narrative media that counter documented history. The conventional norms of historiography and fiction are subverted as the history-fiction interface is blurred. The multiple perceptions narrated in the novels negate the ideas of a single history and a singular truth.

Ghosh experiments with formalistic devices and dispenses with distinctive borders between disciplines in his metafictions. His is an anthropological study of cultures which seeks the voices in the periphery. The titles of Ghosh’s fictions contain intertextual allusions. Ghosh subverts accepted perceptions and raises questions about the authority of western reason and scientific knowledge. The firmness of borders, the division between tradition and modernity, the credibility of language and the reliability of colonial history are interrogated in his novels. Parodic subversions and ironic representations are used to subvert and problematise received notions of history and fiction. His generic, experimentation and narrative strategies emphasize the notion of fiction as an artifact. Mistry presents a diasporic perspective on historical contexts and employs counter histories to propound the idea of the multiplicity of history. He includes ample intertextual references to earlier writers in his novels, which provide explanations on the making of fiction and justify the retelling of history as an exercise warranted by the needs of the diaspora. Tharoor presents a mélange of genres in his fictions and dismantles established narrative strategies. Allegory, parody and satire are used in The Great Indian Novel to problematize the
authority of colonial history. The structure of movies is utilized in *Show Business* in order to expose the incongruities in the Bollywood culture. In *Riot* the structure and conventions of fictional writing are subverted. Intertextuality and self-reflexivity are incorporated in Tharoor’s novels to emphasize the notion of fiction as an artifact. The possibility of multiple perspectives as demonstrated by his fictions too establishes the multiplicity of history.

Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor and Rohinton Mistry who write in the contemporary world of globalization, represent the predicament of modern man going through a deep cultural crisis. A study of their novels especially in relation to the questions of self, history and cultural identity gains significance in this context. Acknowledging plural truths becomes a perquisite to face the challenges posed by the globalised world of multiculturalism. The novels of these writers that raise the issues of identity and history leave scope for further research on issues concerning the narration of nation and the politics of multiculturalism.