Chapter IV

Acting in Time and Out of Time: Sense of Time and Temporality

The objective qualities of time and space that we are forced to alter...how we represent the world to ourselves ... [as] space appears to shrink to a ‘global village’ of telecommunications and a spaceship earth of economic and ecological interdependencies ... and as time horizons shorten to the point where the present is all there is ... so we have [had] to learn to cope with an overwhelming sense of compression of our spatial and temporal worlds. (Harvey, 1989: 240; emphasis in original)

Languages of heteroglossia, like mirrors that face each other, each reflecting in its own way a piece, a tiny corner of the world, force us to guess at and grasp for a world behind their mutually reflecting aspects that is broader, more multi-levelled, containing more and varied horizons than would be available to a single language or a single mirror. (Mikhail Bakhtin, quoted in Vice 200)

The concept of time is always a contentious one. Many thinkers, philosophers, and critics have attempted to define time and the concept has attained its progress in the ongoing refinement of defining process. Time is generally understood in terms of clock and calendars in day-to-day life. One can feel the space/place while experiencing time. On the other hand, one can never experience space / place in the past or future while experiencing time, because time is realized at present. It is always in the present. In grammar books, the representation of time is given in twelve ways of looking at time / tenses. An object is seen in relation to time. An object cannot be seen or experienced in the past or future other than mind’s eye. However, time is referred to in many ways as past time, present time and future time. Time in narration is referred to as chronological time, linear time, non-linear time and multi – linear time. In other words time can be classified as kronos, and kairos which are the concepts used by the Greeks for expressing time. Kronos means chronology or sequential events, but in the Greek mythology, it is equated with god kronos, the father of Zeus that is the reason why it is personified and allegorized as an old man. The Romans have viewed this as Saturn, the god of agriculture. On the other hand,
Kairos means “right time”. It is represented by a young god of the spirit [daimon] who has wings on his shoulders and feet and maintains his equilibrium even when dancing on a knife-edge. The Romans have interpreted it as “auspicious opportunity”. John E. Smith differentiates these concepts as follows:

We know that all the English expressions “a time to” are translations of the term “kairos” - the right time or opportune time to do something is often called “right timing”. This aspect of time is to be distinguished from chronos, the time, which, in Newton’s phrase, aequabiliter fluit. In chronos, we have the fundamental conception of time as measure, the quantity of duration, the artefact and the rate of acceleration of bodies whether on the surface of the earth or in the firmament above. (qouted in Sipiora 2)

According to Meyerhoff Hans, time can be defined as private, personal, subjective or, psychological. In other words, experience stimulates the presence of time. Hans goes on defining time not in terms of experience but in terms of public, objective, “the objective structure of the time relation in nature” (5). Hans says:

It is also our “public” time, which we use, with the aid of watches, calendars, etc., in order to synchronise our private experiences of time for the purpose of social action and communication. Characteristics of this concept of time are that it is independent of how we personally experience time, that is it has intersubjective validity, and most, importantly, that it is believed to refer to an objective structure in nature rather than to a subjective background of human experience. (5)

In day to day life, we wrestle with the task of coupling with private experience of time and the objective notion of time. This is what St. Augustine has in mind in the most famous and most often quoted formulation of the dilemma: “What, then, is time? If no one asks of me, I know; if I wish to explain to him who asks, I know not”. (Conf 11. 14 Outler 224)

Hans says, “Whatever happens, happens now; but “now” does not include change, motion, or lapse of time. Thus the arrow, in its flight through space and time, is, at any given moment or “now”, always standing still – which seems to make mocking of our common – sense notions of flying through space and time” (7).

The inference is that time can be understood in mind and in abstract. In connection to this, Wood refers to Derrida’s insistence of the metaphysical status of the concept of time. He quotes a passage from Derrida translating it himself:
The concept of time belongs entirely to metaphysics and it designates the domination of presence...if something connected with time but which is not itself time needs to be thought of outside the determination of Being as presence, we are no longer dealing with anything which could be called time...it is not possible to oppose of it [that is to the whole historically developed system of metaphysical concepts] a different conception of time, because time in general belongs to metaphysical conceptuality. (2)

This metaphysical concept of time serves in our understanding of time when events, happenings are referred to different tenses. As far as literature is concerned time is always referred to elements of time as given in experience. Hans Meyerhoff says in the book *Time in Literature* (1955) that time can be understood as general yet direct, because it applies to the inner world of impressions, emotions, and ideas for which no spatial order can be given. He goes on to say that, changes and succession can only be linked to our experience. These changes in life become aspects of time. “There is no experience, as it were, which does not have a temporal index attached to it” (1). In other words, the self, person or individual is realized through our consciousness in time. This is realized through experiences “against the background of the succession of temporal moments and changes consisting his/her biography”. (2)

In any narrative, the willing application of temporal and spatial time is possible as far as our experience makes it possible. The complete perception of time with respect to past, present and even future depends on the experience. It is not an easy task to narrate an event ignoring its history. Deepika Bahri says, “Geography is history, the danger is that history is history” (485). Each and everything in this world has histories. Although the totality of the histories cannot be brought back as it happened, histories can be remembered / recollected from memory based on the present experience of temporality and spatiality. In this connection Hans says, “Organic life exists only insofar as it evolves in time...we cannot describe the momentary state of an organization without taking its history into consideration and without referring it to a future state for which this state is merely a point of passage”. (Quoted in Meyerhof 2)

Contemporary writers of Indian Fiction in English especially Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Chandra and Aswin Sanghi make use of Indian great tradition of immortal epics and scriptures, Vedas and Upanishads and regional writings as Amitav Ghosh in different languages in order to build up a rich Indian literature. These authors create modern Indian literature by going back to tradition / histories. The novelists’ engagement with different periods and their understandings of those periods in the present context serve to relive the time and temporality of
the action, which play emotional effect in the contemporary context and guide the present in the light of the histories of the past. The implication is that there is a mutual relation between the past and present, between tradition and modernity. In this regard, T.S. Eliot says, “This historical sense which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is the same time what makes a writer most actually conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity”. (Tradition and Individual Talent)

Jurgen Straub comments in Narration, Identity, and Historical Consciousness that human historical consciousness is forged in temporality which is a “distantiating mode of dealing with change” (51). The fictional writers create fictional worlds, which overlap with actual events of the past time. Straub says that within this fictional world, “the thematized past could be understood as a former present, to which various interpretations of the past and expectations for the future could, in turn, be ascribed”(51).

In Aswin Sanghi’s Chanakya’s Chant (2010) the actions start with the ringtone of cell phone and mobiles, while Pandit Gangasagar Mishra, one of the prime character in his death bed longing to hear the news of Chandini as Prime Minister. Though there are no period markers, time markers, in the second plot of contemporary narrative of “present day” one could calculate and imagine that the contemporary historical narrative starts from Gangasagar’s birth year 1929. Although the second narrative represents the events of present day, the temporality of the narrative is not comprised of a single year, a month, or a day, but the narrative is spread over a century. The narrative line in this section is non-linear. The narrative fictional time is multi-linear. The time of narration is 2010. The beginning and end of the novel focus on the temporality of high-tech, software culture of Indian political history. Then the narrative moves to recent past of Gangasagar’s life through flashback technique. Gangasagar has been described as a student soon after which he is joining with Agarwalji in his business. He learns from Agarwalji his cunningness and fabrication of accounts from Minium. The time marker, which gives link to actual time past events is World War II.

Every action, place, and temporality described in the present day narrative method can be paralleled to the events, actions, place, temporality, and time - space of Chanakya. It is as though Chanakya’s time is relived in the twenty first century. The historical characters and plots, their longing and betrayal that happened in the ancient past seem to happen now. In this line Katinka Ridderbos says, “In a cyclic universe, each event that lies in the past of the present moment also
lies in the future” (2). The political action, corruption, fighting for power and all dirties of politics of Chanakya’s period repeat the past events in the current affairs as the story develops. History repeats itself in the present as it is in the past. The intention of this chapter is not to render how Ashwin Sanghi gives one to one correspondence of sequence of events in the novel but rather to present sense of time that is felt while reading the historical narrative of Chanakya’s time.

The historical narrative of Chanakya’s time is referred to “About 2300 years ago” in each chapter which itself reminds readers to be ready to shift oneself to the ancient past. Other than this, there is no time marker or years, ages of characters are given in the narrative. The temporality of Chandragupta Maurya’s empire is hinted when Gangasagar and Mohanlal go to Patna. Mohanlal points out from the aircraft, “Pataliputra was the capital of Chandragupta Maurya’s massive empire two thousand three hundred years ago. Difficult to imagine, given the pathetic state of Patna, eh?” (CC 28)

The temporality and location of Patna is described worst as compared to the descriptions of Mauryan Empire, which may or may not be authentic, but history tells about the greatness of Mauryan Empire. Taking the historical narrative in its face value the present condition of Patna has lost its majestic and towering personality that once ruled the world. It also shows the poor maintenance by the followers till date. When Mohanlal and Gangasagar bale out from the aircraft, Gangasagar curses everybody saying, “I’m going to die surrounded by two thousand three hundred year old bones. Even if they discover my body later they’ll think I’m just another relic of an ancient civilization” (CC 29). Whether Gangasagar had said it knowingly or unknowingly he was going to become another relic by discovering the granite stone of Chanakya. The past time has engulfed him by Chanakya’s brain, chant, and time which is going to be acquired by him a little later in the same place in his future time. He finds the inscription, which is recited by him several times. This historical chant by the kingmaker forms a driving force in fulfilling the wish of Suvasini, the lover of Chanakya in the present context by Chandiningupta as modern Suvasini. Translating the chant Gangasagar’s teacher says, “It’s the ultimate recognition of female power”.

‘Primal Shakti, I bow to thee; all – encompassing Shakti, I bow to thee; that through which God creates, I bow to thee; creative power of the kundalini; mother of all, to thee I bow,’...

Four thousand days you shall pray
Four hundred chants every day.

Chanakya’s power is yours to take

Chandragupta, to make or break.

If there’s a lull, start once more.

King must be queen, to be sure.

Suvasini’s curse shall forever halt

If you can cure Chanakya’s fault. (CC 34-35)

The contemporary time setting of the novel takes to the time setting of the past where time is suspended. The actions in both narratives are similar with respect to characters’ intentions, political strategies, cultural and religious differences. The time and temporality display in the novel the recurring attitude of histories. Actions happen in the past, they happen in the present, and they will happen in future. The action takes place in fragmented fashion where other characters know without reporting to them. There are many instances where the omniscient narrator takes readers for granted. One such is Chandini’s encounter with a man on the road and her attack on his private parts. Soon after this action, Gangasagar asks Gupta, “I want her” “I need her badly”, (CC 79) taking the reader’s assumption that Gangasagar has known Chandini and her brave episode for granted.

The time sequence is non-linear where actions take place in a zigzag manner. The present time narrative starts with hospitalized Gangasagar aspiring things that would turn in favour of him in future. Then he reflects the actions using flashback technique recalling from his memory how he encountered Agarwlji, Ikrambai, Menon, Chandini and his political strategy. His recollection depends heavily on the past events. His findings in granite stone and the action represented in it is very old. The time represented in it is relived in the present according to the female shakti as wished by Suvasini, Chanakya’s beloved. On the other hand in the beginning of “chapter one” Chanakya orders one of his pupils to tell Chandragupta that he is the emperor of Magadha, “as his mind wandered back to how and when the saga had started”. (CC 4)

The textual cues like cell phones, gigabytes, chips and software company of present time are well contrasted with horses, pigeon letters, sword, courtly things and lack of transportation “ Chanakya, and then having taken permission for a sabbatical from the university chancellor,
started preparations for the long march to the city of his birth” (CC 47). On the other hand, Gangasagar’s use of Electronic Voting Machines and his manipulation of it to get more votes by sharing contrast the past time. “Electronic Voting Machines. They’re being used in these elections. No more paper ballots” (CC 408)... the algorithm will determine dynamically what our candidate’s vote – share is” (CC 410).

Myths and history overlap as fiction in most of the writings of Indian Fiction in English. Coupling of myths and history with fiction form a major part of contemporary novelists’ attempt to contrast the cultural history of the past time to the present time. In connection with this in an interview Ludmila Volna says that the authors of India engage with myths and history they cannot do otherwise because “the myths are a part of their [our] culture. Their works are spontaneous creations which come out of the innermost wells of their beings” (Agarwal 137).

Prof. G.C. Tripathi, Coordinator, from Kalakosa reviews *Studying the Narrative Literature of India* by K. Ayyappa Paniker. He observes:

This is perhaps also one of the reasons why the Indian narratives are placed in the *fluidity of time* and not in any given moment of history. The narrative time in Indian texts, according to the author, is more psychological in character than logical. The happenings relate to an undefined area of time whereby the emphasis from a definite dateline is shifted to an indefinite infinity opening the possibility of such a happening any time and any-where in the world. However, the authors of Indian narratives are a little more specific about the placement of their stories within certain framework of *space* which is obvious by the fact that the author mentions the region where certain happenings took place. K. Ayyappa Paniker points to the fact that the Jatakas usually start with the mention of Varanasi in Kashi region or the fables of *Panchtantra* with a mention of the city of Mahilaropya in the southern region of India. He, therefore, expresses the opinion that the Indian narrative "can be said to be a spatial one and this makes for a more free handling of the time factor". The temporal dimension, according to him, is often underplayed while the space factor gets added importance. However, this is not very convincing and I would think that in an Indian narrative the space is an unimportant as the time and the specific mention of a particular place is in no way significant to the basic intent of the story. That what happens in a fable of *Panchtantra* in Mahilaropya could happen in the same way and in the same manner anywhere else in the world. (Tripathi)
The novelists of contemporary Indian writing in English know the pulse of the time. They make use of the traditional narrative forms to suit the context in the present time in order to attract the audience and bring the richness of our histories. Rohit Panikker says, “The Indian audience has one simple need - to be entertained while also being educated. Nobody has the patience to go through heavy history textbooks to learn about their own history, heritage and culture. Instead, narrate your tales with an apt plot, develop your characters and present it to the readers and you give them what they want, information and entertainment”. (Panikker)

Panikker’s view of narrative is displayed in *Chanakya’s Chant*. The author tries to interweave the events of Chanakya and the political happenings of the present time by a connector of the historical relic, which is Chanakya’s own inscription. Commenting on *Chanakya’s Chant*, Latha Anantharaman reviews in *The Hindu*:

> Historical fiction has an excellent reputation, and rightly so. Many 20th century writers have not only brought to life a long-dead figure but also immersed the reader in that person's time, civilization and ethos. For the writer to convincingly recreate that lost time, he has to have assimilated it all himself. It takes years, and skill. Sanghi has instead crammed assorted facts into his head as if for an exam and he spews them out in the same way, undigested and arranged without meaning. His plot contains the stalest clichés and no redemption. (Anantharaman)

A novel is not fully history. History is not complete account of truthful past events. The temporality of History is not a temporal novel. On the other hand a novel has all the necessary ingredients that could ordain it as one. It has both good and evil characters. History has been used into Indian Fiction in English. The novelists’ use is unavoidable terms and some noteworthy attempts have been made in the direction of experimentation with history, the historiographic metafiction. In line with this Ruth Ronen says, “Fictional events are too markedly anchored in the history and geography of the world” (197).

In *Chanakya’s Chant*, history parallels the present. The novel’s storyline moves backwards and forwards between two periods in time, “Present day” and “About 2300 years ago”. The first chapter takes the readers to “Pataliputra, the capital of Magadha, the great Brahmanic empire in the cradle of the beautiful Ganges valley in eastern Bharat” (CC 2). The readers are taken to a fascinating journey through the ancient India and through the life of
Chanakya, one of the greatest political thinkers India has ever produced. The writer identifies India as Bharat, the old name for India.

*Chanakya’s Chant* portrays attempts of experimentation. The author uses quotes from other authors and eminent personalities as part of the dialogues and conversations by the characters. He himself gives the list in the index at the end of the book. The novel displays the authors’ hard work in researching well which strikes a similarity with Salman Rushdie’s pattern of listing its references at the end as in *The Enchantress of Florence*. Although the author has researched well and acquired the historical “facts” he quotes from Charles McCabe that “any clod can have the facts, having an opinion is an art” which is the great driving force of the novelists of Indian Writing in English to engage with history.

*Chanakya’s Chant* connects past and present through a subtle intertwining narrative technique, a plane crash after which Gangasagar found the granite tablet on which Chanakya’s Chant was inscribed and is 2300 years old. The language of the inscription is in Bramini told by Gangasagar’s teacher. Chanakya’s chant appears thereafter throughout the novel, giving it a Hindu propaganda touch. The novel portrays ancient India as the hub of Brahmin domination and the glorious Hindu tradition and the novel poses the risk of crossing the borders of secular ground. Sanghi’s first novel *The Rozbal Line* (2007) also deals with the delicate petals of historical consciousness, a propagandist attempt to assimilate the History of Jesus into the web of Hindu epics.

The novel presents the witty remarks and thought provoking cunningness of Chanakya. In the “Present Day” Gangasagar, the mimesis of Chanakya is portrayed in the novel as the contemporary Chanakya with all the vices of an Indian politician. This modus operandi definitely provides the writer with ample scopes for constructing a political satire. Moreover, Sanghi has described through Gangasagar and his attempts to gain power and achieve a united Indian status by using the available different sentimental contradictions such as caste, religion, sex and race.

The streets leading up to the rally site were festooned with bunting and flags and a hundred thousand people lined up waiting for a glimpse of two female deities – one political and the other filmic. The rally ground was an expanse of saffron, green, and red – the three colours of the ABNS flag. Saffron for Hindus, green for Muslims and red for the Dalits. (CC156)
Gangasagar makes some arrangement to shoot Chandini in the rally in order to get sympathy votes. In the middle of the meeting, she is shot and allowed to lie in the lap of the actress Anjali. She has been taken several photographs and broadcast in Doordarshan for fifty times. Gangasagar wants her to be a “martyr without having died” (CC 159). He tells Chandini to be busy with travels, which would further bring the votes of different religious people in India. He is sure of her winning in the election. He says to her to go to Tirumala, Goa, Ajmer, and Amritsar. The reason he gives her is very interesting and displays the cunning political use of faith of the people. He says:

‘In Tirumala you shall bow down before Lord Venkateshwara and make the Hindus happy. In Goa you shall light a candle at Bom Jesus and make the Christians happy. You shall next go place a chador of flowers at the Dargah of Moinuddin Chisti in Ajmer, making the Muslims happy. Finally, you shall offer prayers at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, making the Sikhs happy. After you have made everyone happy, they will make you happy – by electing your party to government.’(CC 160)

However, the novel can be seen in the direction of entertaining certain archetypal north Indian myths about South Indians. At one point in the novel Gangasagar ridicules his future secretary Menon for his Keralite slang of English. “Saar,’ began the young Keralite, his oily black hair slicked back carefully, ‘I am aa-nerd tomit you’...Gangasagar’ then realized that the south Indian was saying that he was *honoured to meet him*. (CC 144)

The novel presents the corruption, misuse of religion, caste, sex, history for the political ends which answers the questions and rules of the secret games played within the nation while Anna Hazare’s anti corruption force bring major changes in the Indian politics. This novel washes the dirty linen in public there by creating awareness among people the way Indian politics function. If Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* is a novel with its political correctness, Sanghi’s *Chanakya’s Chant* smashes off the any kind of political masquerade with utmost brutality, which would lead any reader to rethink his or her trust on any political party or group. (The Indian Commentator)

These authors create fictional worlds, which form parallel worlds in relation to non-fictional versions of the world. According to Ruth Ronen the domains of time and space can be created according to the logic of parallelism. This parallelism entails the autonomy of fictional time and space in relation to the temporality and spatiality of the actual world.
Ashwin Sanghi has portrayed both histories of past and present with the highlight of sense of time which repeats the past temporality and space-time into the present space-time and temporality. The key focus of the novel is about money and power, which is the kingmaker of the spatial-temporal element in Chanakya’s time as well as the present. The key/focal characters Chanakya and Gangasagar realize that money and power are very significant in order to be kingmakers. Gangasagar gets experiences from Agrawalji with frequent acquaintance with him. Gangasagar begins to understand the incestuous relationship between business and politics.

By presenting the past time, Ashwin asserts through the constants money, power and corruption all of them function with a single-minded aim to have a united India/Bharat. He presents the temporality of the past action in the present as it is. The political strategy, twisting and turning in promise, divide and rule policy, which the modern historians holistically relate to the British as if the Indians have never heard of it earlier. The parallel narrative shows the cyclical history. History repeats itself. There is not much difference between Chanakya and Gangasagar except that Chanakya has a revengeful aim to avenge his father’s death. On the other hand, Gangasagar has picked up the trademark of the political scenario after being associated with people of that kind. Agarwalji’s family knows the time of the harvest. They can benefit out of the British as well as the Indian government. They pulse the trend of the time.

Kautilya’s *Arthasastra* is the oldest and the most exhaustive treatise on the governance and administration of a state. Chanakya or Visnugupta has destroyed the power of the Nanda dynasty and placed Chandragupta Maurya on the throne of Magadha. Ashwin Sanghi says in an interview:

Too much attention seems to be given to the political machinations of Chanakya whereas insufficient attention is paid to the fact that his seminal work, the Arthashastra, was mostly about good governance. I was absolutely amazed to find that the Arthashastra even specifies how grain should be stored, how a treasury should be constructed, the ideal form of taxation, maintenance of law and order, the preferred width of a carriage road, and virtually every aspect of sensible government policy. It's unfortunate to see that what plagues India today is simply a fundamental lack of governance. I think the lesson for all of us is that we need to pay more attention to Chanakya's lessons in governance rather than his lessons on real politics. (Moolchandani)

The entire novel is about the political strategies which do not change over the time. The history of the ancient india repeats itself. However, although Chanakya displays the domination of
brahminical attitudes over other caste, religion, and culture, he has used his skills in order to bring a united Bharat by sacrificing his entire life. He does not want the outsider namely Alexander the Great to invade India and occupy it. On the contrary in the present context although Gangasagar does not have aim of Chanakaya in choosing Chandini he wants to fulfill the wish of Suvasini’s curse. His hard core cunningness and his thoughtlessness about other caste and religion push the female shakti to rule the entire India. The past lives in the present by Gangasagar’s making of histories which he is interested. Sanghi says about his interest in history in an interview:

I was always interested in history. I was an avid reader of Amar Chitra Katha comics during my school days. The books that my grandfather would send me were also mostly historical. History signified—in my mind at least—an older, magical era. An era of kings, queens, palaces, rituals, chariots and elephants. History was my means of escaping the humdrum of my ordinary existence. (Moolchandani)

At the present juncture of history, there is a trend to go back to study the ancient Indian classical literature to find the solutions of the present day world. The ancient classical Indian literature is considered to be the treasure house of information on various aspects of life. The Indians are returning to their roots and interpreting the traditional knowledge in the modern phrases and idioms. This paradigm shift in thinking has led to the revival of the critical studies of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Smritis, the epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha, the Buddhist and the Jain literature.

Dirk Wiemann says that the contemporary Indian novelists engage in the project of ‘locating modernity in the present’. The select novels engage themselves in a re-evaluation of the here-and-now of the Indian palimpsest as very much a part of the modern. The status of ‘modern’ is now no longer considered as “western”. Dirk Wiemann says of these writers, “What is at stake in this body of work could then be described as a re-figuring of the present: “not an originary gesture, not a refounding or a return to true origins, but a call for transforming the contemporary moment and forging the conceptual and political instruments adequate to this task” (7).

Indian Writing in English, especially the novels which are considered to be ‘national allegories’ are obsessed with time as Partha Chatterjee rightly calls ‘heterogeneous time’. Tharoor uses intertextual device which serve to ridicule “the postcolonial politicians’ fantasy to make the present identical with the hallowed past, and thus win votes for a politics at degree zero history”
Tharoor’s *Great Indian Novel* problematizes history. His narrator reflects this. “The re-counting of history is only the order we artificially impose upon life to permit its lessons to be more clearly understood” (GIN 109).

Dirk Wiemann views this novel through the eyes of Northrop Frye and Hayden White. He says:

> In Northrop Frye – inflected taxonomy of “pre-generic plot structures” suggested by Hayden White, then, *The Great Indian Novel* would encourage a reading of history as romance. In Frye’s distinction, the specificity of romance “as a literary design” lies in its tendency “to displace myth in a human direction and yet, in contrast to “realism”, to conventionalize content in an idealized direction. (91)

Similarly, Vikram Chandra’s *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* describes stories within stories, which are inserted into a complex set of narrative frames. Meenakshi Mukherjee calls this type of narratives as “pre-novel narratives” and “a larger story which contains a smaller one which in turn contains another and go on” (5) (Mukherjee Realism and Reality). *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* exhibits this sort of structure of narratives embedded in frames of artificial orality. The ultimate narrative frame consists in a vaguely determined situation in which a character named Sandeep tells a story about his encounter, in the jungle, with a mediating woman who tells him a story. The woman’s story, again, is split into a variety of differently framed narratives, involving among others, a monkey typing the lives of his former incarnation as a human away on the keyboard of typewriter, a US-returned student, and his parents.

The novel shows the unending storytelling. It is neither conclusive nor complete. For instance Chandra says in the novel, “this was after all only part of the story” (REPR 581). In addition, the unending stories “will grow like a lotus vine, that will twist in on itself and expand ceaselessly” (REPR 617). The novel shows non-linearity and generic plurality, which contribute to the heterogenisation of time. The structure of the novel displays to the structures of temporalities that Ramila Thapar has identified in ancient Brahminical methods of conceiving of time: a system of wheels within wheels – yugas within mahayugas within kalpas that still accommodates linearity. Commenting on Thapar’s account of the Yuga system, Dirk Wiemann says,

> The yuga system as one that located irreversible ‘linear arcs’ within an overarching cyclic and iterative pattern of mahayugas and kalpas finds its well-high homologous correspondence in Chandra’s composition where different linear narrative blocs of various duration are ultimately integrated into a circular structure. The various endings
of the text all spell the return to the story element of its beginning (the shooting of a monkey), and hence the very last sentence speaks out the resolution to “start all over again” (105).

The novel’s title is derived from the Tamil poet Chempulappeyanirar; the author acknowledges it at the end of the novel. Chandra has created a character to sing the song,

“What could any mother be to yours?
What kin is my father to yours anyway?
And how did you and I meet ever?
But in love our hearts have mingled
like red earth and pouring rain”. (REPR 256)

At the end of the novel Sanjay comes back to India from London in order to renounce Yama’s boon and finally die. He shouts against the waterfall.

You children of the future, you young men and women who will set as free, may you be happy, may you be faultless,...may you be Hindustani and Indian, and English and everything else at the same time, may you be neither this nor that, may you be better than us, I bless you, may you be happy: the last spark of desire leaving him,... and he was free. (REPR 629)

In this respect, the novel invests the anti-colonial past with a utopian charge as Walter Benjamin’s wish fulfilment in the present: “Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim”. (Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History” 254)

Ironically, Sanjay’s address is not heard because of the sound of the waterfall, thus his wish fulfilment is incomplete as the story at the end of the novel is ongoing. Meenakshi Mukherjee says: “The novel in the sense we understand it today is concerned with circumstantial reality, with the concrete and the particular that are influenced very largely by time and space” (145). This opinion holds good for in the works of Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh and Vikram Chandra. They concentrate on the study of myth-history matrix.

According to Mulk Raj Anand,
If this conception of the function of art in society approximates to the real needs of people in our time, then the artist is a revolutionary in the true sense. And as he can perceive reality at its highest, and disclose the way to a new life, the artist stands as an inspiring force behind all those men and women who face the tasks of reconstructing the future society out of the shambles of near prehistoric present (Quoted by K.K. Sharma. 6).

Amitav Ghosh presents the contemporary time and its issues left by colonial history, which focus on issues relating to multiple identities, transculturality and the difficulties of belonging. *The Hungry Tide* and *Sea of Poppies* serve as an example of the present time which simultaneously review Indian history at the same time explore issues of migration, displacement, homelessness and the complex reality of transcultural existence.

On the other hand, Rushdie, Tharoor, Vikram Chandra attempt to narrativise the post-colonial history of India by turning to Indian traditions and texts. In *Midnight’s Children*, Rushdie tries to bring the time of prehistory and Indian national life by “hunting at the infinite possibilities of the country” (Imaginary Homeland 16). Similarly Chandra evokes the infinite and unfulfilled notion of storytelling and the burden of past in the present. Tharoor chooses a form suitable to the retelling of “the recasting of events, episodes and characters from the Mahabharatha”. (Tharoor 30)

Tharoor presents the contemporary political and cultural time by his strategy of narrative, which is based on Indian traditions. He problematises history as well as time. His strategy is coupled with culture and legacies. The past events and time are recast in the present time in a very complex manner. As Vyasa puts it,

> History... the world, the universe, all human life and so, too, every institution under which we live – is in constant state of evolution. The world and everything in it is being created and re-created...each hour, each day, each week, going through the unending process of birth and rebirth which has made us all. India has been born and reborn again. India is for ever, and India is forever being made. (GIN 266)

This shows us how Chandra feels the unending story, incomplete story within story that the incomplete history of India can be written. Tharoor wants to reiterate the great Indian tradition of storytelling. Both Tharoor and Chandra attempt at representing past time and events through
multiple mode of storytelling. Tharoor explores in this novel “the kinds of stories a society tell about itself... and the forces and events that have made India, and nearby unmade it”. (Tharoor 31)

The representation of time and movement are described in the words and phrases. Since Tharoor uses epic tradition and the oral narrative, surely the employment of gods and humans are indispensable. He presents the time sequences as circular. The representation of oral account gives the time markers, as narrators say such as, “but I am...getting ahead of my story” (GIN 18) and “but we must get back to our story, where were we, Ganapathi?” (GIN 34)

The present time consists of the past time and future time. Similarly the novels of Rushdie, Tharoor, Chandra, Ghosh and Ashwin display the status that “the present, as well as past, is always already irremediably textualised for us, and the overt intertextuality of historiographic metafiction serves as one of the textual signals of this post modern realization. (Hutcheon 128)

Tharoor presents in The Great Indian Novel the historical account of India which covers a much longer time-period. Time of history spreads over from the nationalist movement to the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984. He portrays the actual historical characters from the pre-and-post independence time such as Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah, Patel, Indira Gandhi, Krishna Menon, Sam Manekshaw, and Arun Shourie. He also portrays some well known historical events such as the Salt March, Jallian Wallah Bagh, the assassination of Gandhi, the Emergency, and the general elections of 1982. Meenakshi Sharma comments on the representation of time in the novel thus:

The Parallelism of the ancient epic with the story of modern India provides Tharoor with an appropriately vast narrative framework for representing the variegated and complex cultural and political environment of Indian society. The re-vitalization and re-telling of the epic becomes a strategy for the retrospective interrogation of the recent past which marks many texts of the 80s. The acerbic wit and satire of the novel is not reserved for the British alone but is aimed equally at those who allowed Gandhi’s ideals to be forgotten or trivialized, at the generation into autocracy of the freedom won by sacrifice and idealism, at some of the traditions of ancient India as well as the ethics of the modern society. (Sharma 137)
However, Tharoor does not rest comfortably on the idealized past. On the other hand, he attempts to portray the complexity of Modern India where the past and the present coexist. In this coexistence, he hopes for the emergence of values and ideals for the present through a careful examination of the cultural and historical legacy. As Dharma tells Yudhistra on the mountain top:

   No more certitude...accept doubt and diversity. Derive your standards from the world around you and not from a heritage whose relevance must be constantly tested. Reject equally the sterility of ideologies and the passionate prescriptions of those who think themselves infallible. (GIN 418)

In ‘Imaginary Homelands’, Rushdie himself has a similar opinion to say: “[At] times when the state takes reality into its own hands, and sets about distorting it, altering the past to fit its present needs, then making of the alternative realities of art including the novel of memory, becomes politicized” (14).

The representation of time and approach of history by Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor and Vikram Chandra overlap and form more similarities than differences. They employ many of the same devices which push them towards similar ends/destinations of incomplete history and story. Though Chandra does not deal with national allegory of India like Rushdie, he engages with history and the past events. He uses the same devices as Tharoor. Both writers construct their fictional world on historical record and play off traditional epic cycles against “realistic” historical and social narrative while extending elements of the “real” into the mythic fantastic. Tharoor as mentioned above uses Mahabharata as a backdrop where as Chandra draws on the Gita, the Ramayana and the above mentioned Tamil poetry.

As he indulges in the events of past time and mythical time, he is also conscious of the spatio-temporal aspects of the present time. He uses like Rushdie and Tharoor the materials of contemporary world of jeans, cricket, and amplifiers. The family of Abhay and their association with monkey starts/signifies the contemporary time marker. Chandra describes casually, “in a room ... ancient typewriter beat out its eternal thik, creating yet another urgent massive to a national newspaper about the state of democracy in India” (REPR 1). And the conversation takes on the hot topic of cricket in India. “We could still win the Test if Parikh bats well tomorrow, ‘but he’s been known to give out under pressure” (REPR 2). Abhay is unaware of cricket as he is fully western that he feels India and his experiences belong to some other yugas.
Abhay walked in a huge circle, over the tufts of grass and through the teams of barefooted boys engaged in interminable games of cricket. To the south, in the crowded lanes and bazaars of Jabalpur, his past waited, eager to confront him with old friends and half-forgotten sounds and smells he had been away for several centuries, not four years, afraid of what he might find lurking in the shadows of bygone days, and suddenly felt his soul drop away, felt it withdrawing, leaving him cold and abstracted. (REPR 5)

Chandra uses circle, circular imagery in many times in the novel to highlight the Hindu mythological time as Thapar says that Indian time hooked to cyclical time in both mythology and other narratives. When monkey turns into human, he feels the same as Abhay in encountering “the children of Kala, of Time” (REPR 11). The monkey whose name Sanjay born of a good Brahmin family died in 1911. He is reborn because of the bad karma” (REPR 12). He is very much afraid of his human form. His mind is filled with nostalgia and afraid of what [he] would discover in the next few minutes, afraid of the bewildering depredations and convolutions that are the children of kala, of Time” (REPR 11)

Chandra describes the abundance of nostalgia of the historical Anglo-Indian soldier James Skinner as “Islander” (12). The mind being in the present time remembers the past events through memory. Memory can supply only distorted version of the past events. The past events can never be in chronological time. A single event can never have its authenticity on singleness. As Sanjay wants to fix his mind on one image and cling to it, his wish turns into “a sea of stories”. “Even the images we cling to give birth to other stories, there are only histories that generate other histories, and I am simultaneously seduced by and terrified of these multiplicities”. (REPR 12)

The realization of time in Sanjay haunts him. He feels better in the rebirth, as an animal because of the bad karma. The complication and burden of the past events may not torture the mind of animals. He says that “longs for the animal simplicities of life pointed securely in one direction and uncomplicated by the past” (12). The same notion and longing is expressed by Abhay in the beginning of the novel. He observes the life of Sanjay in the incarnation of monkey and food given to him by his mother. The monkey and Abhay eat the same ‘daily bread’, but Abhay is loaded with past events and not free even a single moment. Chandra describes the mind of Abhay as: “Abhay was unable to shake the conviction that the animal, secure in the cool shade of the leafy tree, was enjoying his meal more than he was, and that then there was some secret irony, some occult meaning, in their unwitting sharing of food”(REPR 3).
Abhay Mishra feels his soul “drop away” and watches himself “as if from a great height”. In thin timeless space, he takes out his childhood “toy” gun to shoot a thieving monkey (REPR 4). His action sets in train a host of events in “present historical” time that incorporate the appearance of timeless figures of myth and stories about people experiencing moments of suspended time within battles against the forces of history.

In the novel Yama, the Lord of Death could not understand the play of time and why the monkey which had once been with human consciousness and returned to the status of animal had returned once again to human consciousness. When Yama is asked by the monkey (Sanjay) about what is next, Yama replies in a confused notion of time.

Where on the Wheel is the next time around? Is it to be up a ladder or down the slippery back of a past misdeed, suddenly fanged? I don’t know, Sanjay. Karma and dharma, those are mechanical laws sewn into the great fabric of the cosmos, you understand, mysterious in their functioning, there’s no predicting the results of those deadly calculations, each producing a little burst of Karma to be weighed in those inscrutable balances, who knows, who can understand the subtle ways of dharma. (REPR 15)

Chandra divides his novel in an epic style. Chapters start with “before”, “The book of war and Ancestors”, “now”, “The game of cricket” and “After”. This division itself shows the last time/past histories and events and at the end of the novel the expected future time/future histories/events. Thus, there is no end in the interpretation of histories.

The novel is divided by these binaries of time. The linear structure of “before” and “after” that circulates the entire novel is consciously brought to the present by the introduction of a repetitive “now” in order to mix the times, thus the present and past both seem to inhabit a narrative space of “during”. On the other hand the introduction of the “before” and “after” makes the novel to attain a cyclical time where the opening event of Abhay Mishra shooting the monkey and thus constitute a beginning again. Within this circular time, the “now” is also a space of change as the crowd of listeners grows and becomes the space of the “then”.

Paul Sharrad observes this novel that ‘the encompassing of diversity is not permitted to coalesce into an overeasy (or overforced) organic unity” (241). The novel does not render the idea of nation, but it rejects any underpinning of the national, “by recourse to foundational uniformity outside of the contingencies of time and human action” (241).
Louis Dumont praises viewing the Indian classical concept of yuga, the four ages of the world. This concept of time as far as India is concerned focuses on individual people, individual events, Dumont argues that in the Indian concept of yuga, there is a conscious devaluation of time, just as in the concept of dharma there is a devaluation of the individual. (Veer 79)

Like Chandra, Tharoor takes the story of the Mahabharata, the epic of Hindu mythology in order to construct a fictional world which contextualizes the Indian Independence movement and the first three of decades post independence. He transforms the actual historical characters of Indian history into characters from mythology.

Tharoor himself explains the title The Great Indian Novel, as “Maha” great, “Bharata”, India, novel instead of an epic. He organizes the sections and chapters such a way that the novel reflects as it is in Mahabharata in terms of events and themes. The novel is divided into 18 “books” just as the Mahabharata has 18 books. For instance, “the first Book: The twice-Born Tale forms as a counterpart to the Mahabharatha’s “Book of the Beginning”.

Tharoor uses numerous puns, allusions, allegory which remind the contemporary time. The narrator of the novel is Ved Vyas. He is also the narrator of the Mahabharata. He rightly summarises his views on nationalist versions of history.

“Some of our more Manichean historians tend to depict the British villains as supremely accomplished – the omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent manipulators of the destiny of India. Stuff and nonsense, of course” (116). Tharoor’s opposed view of Manichean dualities also gives cues that the Mahabharata cannot be considered as “pure” pre-colonial past. It cannot be considered as a vehicle of the look back a pure history. Since it denies the last few centuries of historical involvement, it will not be a pure historical representation. The Mahabharata itself must pass through the filter of colonial experience. In the novel, also mentioned earlier in this chapter, Ved Vyas tells Ganapathi that like India like history is constantly changing. “India has been born and reborn scores of times, and it will be reborn again. India is forever, and India is forever being made. (GIN 245)

Tharoor talks about the ever change of history which implies the time as well. He advocates the importance of historicity of time in his Riot:

I think the best crystal ball is the rear-view mirror...it is part of the writer’s job to recapture moments of history. My novel stands as portrait of time, of tendencies that
were brought to the fore, the genie that was let out of the bottle and could not be put back. I felt we should take that genie by looking it squarely in the eye. (quoted in Roy)

In the beginning of the novel, the narrator Ved Vyas points out the spatio-temporal condition of India. He says that India is far from being an underdeveloped country but it is a “highly developed one in an advanced state of decay” (GIN 1). This clearly shows the past time. The narrator illustrates this by mirroring *Mahabharata* onto modern India in order to highlight the values of tradition. As Chanakya expresses an idea of united Bharat in Ashwin Sanghi’s *Chanakya’s Chant*, Ved Vyas longs for a singular idea of India. On the contrary the present time India has forgotten the traditional values. In the end of the novel, Ved Vyas says that the contemporary perception of India is not really India”. “Whatever our ancestors expected of India, Ganapathi, it was not this. It was not a land where dharma and duty have come to mean nothing”.

The views of Ricoeur and White can be applied in *The Great Indian Novel*. The novel is narrative of human expression on temporality. “The historicity of human experience can be brought to language only as narrativity” (Ricoeur 1981: 294). Moreover, this narrativity can be articulated only by the crossed interplay between history and fiction. In line with this Neelam Srivastava says:

> Both referential modes are necessary for our historicity – also translated as historicality. This intersection between fiction and history is a vital exchange, emphasizing the narrativity of history, while at the same time drawing attention to the mimesis inherent in fiction. To recognize the values of the past as different to those of the present is an opening up of the real towards the possible according to Ricoeur. For him, there is only a history of the potentialities of the present, the imaginative potential contained in the present of which the historian takes full advantage. (120)

This ‘potential’ is represented by both Tharoor and Chandra. Like Chandra, Tharoor mixes the present time words like, computer, cricket, television in the backdrop of mythical characters and gods. In the end of the novel, Yudhishtir meets the god of time and gets history lesson. “I am Kaalam, the god of Time; he said with a dazzling smile. ‘You have reached the mountain top, Yudhishtir; your time has come. Mount my chariot with me and let us travel to the court of history”. (REPR 415)
This scene is juxtaposed by Ved Vyas waking up from his dream vision “to today’s India, to our land of computers and corruption, of myths and politicians and box-wallahs with moulded plastic briefcases” (GIN 418).

He says to Ganapathi that stories never end; they continue to live everywhere “in the hills and the plains, the hearths, of India”. He says that he has constructed ‘the history from a completely mistaken perspective’. Thus the narrator wants to retell the story like Chandra, narrator in Red Earth Pouring Rain. The narratives of both the novels follow cyclical time, repeating the stories and histories again and again with changes every time.

Similar to Tharoor and Chandra, Rushdie has used devices in The Enchantress of Florence not from traditional epic rather from the history of Mughal Empire. He traces the unending storytelling and multiple histories of East and West. The timeless past events haunt the forgotten character/figure of Mughals namely Qora Koz. Rushdie views the time in the fantasy world. The actual world is considered as phantoms. The mirage nature of time is brought out in the entire novel.

The novel is an historical account of the visit of a stranger with multiple names (Uccello or Mogor or Vespucci) to the Mughal Emperor Akbar’s court. He claims to be a distant relative of Akbar, born of an exiled princess and Italian from Florence. The novel discloses as well as reflects the mutual mystery, suspicion and mistrust between the East and the West. It offers interesting versions of different historical events, individuals and societies of different spatio-temporality. Rushdie has used the western history of Granada in The Moor’s Last Sigh as a backdrop to depict the contemporary politico-socio-cultural and historical changes of India. On the other hand, he takes a forgotten character of Mughal empire, namely Kora Koz to build up his own historical world setting time of Akbar and Niccolo Machiavalli. The time frame does not match strictly because the lifetime of Niccolo Machiavalli is 1469-1527 and the Moghul Emperor Akbar is 1542-1605. The two time period cannot have been in contact with one another. However, the narrator of the novel spins through story within story thereby brings their lives, ideas into one context.

The novel has three parts: the first is about Mogor dell’Amore’s venture to tell stories to Akbar; the second relates to the story of three friends in Florence, Italy; and the third is about the mysterious tales of Qara Koz, a forgotten Mughal princess whose beauty enchants all who see her. As the narrative develops, the fusion of fact and fiction, imaginary and real, time and timeless haunt the entire novel. This imaginary/fictional world meets both the factual and real
life personages such as Amerigo Vespucci, Niccolo Machiavelli, and Botticelli. These historical characters are presented side by side with backdrop against which Rushdie formulates his ideas regarding beauty, power, art, and even the nature of humanity. The relationship between history and fiction in the novel is playfully interactive. Like Chandra, Tharoor, Ghosh as seen in above chapters Rushdie once again employs the storytelling aspect of narrative in order to highlight the idea of history as a text among other texts. Rushdie plays with the idea of history as a form of story which is always woven out of the fabric of fables. This is evident in *Midnight’s Children*, *The Moor’s Last Sigh* and *The Enchantress of Florence*. Most of the selected novels for this project show the process of textualisation of history through the narrator. The narrators of most of the novels remind the reader of the importance of narrativization. Moreover, Hayden White’s idea of emplotment is displayed in these novels. According to White, “the meaning of the stories is given in their “emplotment”. By emplotment, a sequence of events is “configured” (“grasped together”) in such a way as to represent “symbolically” what would otherwise be unutterable in language, namely, the ineluctably “aporetic” nature of the human experience of time. (White 173)

Emplotment is the putting together of selected events, characters and actions into a plot line. It is a mediation of pre-understanding, event and story. And a plot is but one of many competing alternation woven from a vast array of possible characterizations, plot lines and themes. In emplotment, the plot is not just a chronology of events or the schematic of a casual chain that links events and episodes together into a narrative structure. Emplotment is also the intertextual arrangement of events within the text, and the epistemology of time and being-within-time. In *The Enchantress of Florence*, Rushdie has incorporated various stories like that of Akbar, Machiavelli, Medicis, Jodha and others into the main story dealing with the life of the hidden princess, Qara Koz. In the novel the multiple subplots are integrated and directed towards the main plot, which is the story of Qara Koz in order to form a unified whole.

The storyline of the novel consists of many stories. Each story in itself is independent, but in the narrative, it is intertwined. The narration of the stories progress in most different historical times and places. As far as India is concerned, the time is the Mughal emperor’s grandfather Babar and Akbar’s own time. In the case of Europe, especially Italy, Florence and the “New World”, this is the time of Machiavelli. The novel presents the parallel time to that of Akbar’s reign when three Jesuits are sent to Akbar’s palace in 1580. This serves an example of timelessness by mixing up various spacio-temporalities.
The sense of time deceives the narrator; Niccolo Vespucci believes to be what he is not, Akbar’s uncle, “Niccolo Vespucci who was raised to believe that he was born of a princess was the child of a Mirror’s Child” (EOF 442). On the contrary, this belief enables him to tell Akbar his fantastic story, which integrates among other events, Machiavelli’s and Akbar’s time. The novel portrays a significant combination of culture and cultural history by mirroring places and times which are different at the same time as similar as in the words of Akbar, “The curse of the human race is not that we are so different from one another, but that we are so dislike” (EOF 392). Rushdie seems to assert that in the juncture of socio-politico-cultural and religio-historical, and colonial hang over and their problems can be washed away by transcending nature of past events. It does not make these problems forget, but to put them into a place on which light falls from astonishing angles. The narrator says, “The past was a light that if properly directed could illuminate the present more brightly than any contemporary lamp” (EOF 315).

Rushdie discusses within space and time in the novel the interaction between historiography and fiction, the nature of identity and subjectivity, the question of reference and representation, the intertextual and ideological nature of past. In line with this Meenakshi Bharat observes:

In *The Enchantress of Florence*, his latest fictive offering, though he also regurgitates all his other old concerns – magic realism, religion, power structures, globalization, colonization, history, exile to name just a few storytelling still seems to rank high on his agenda...the narrative itself – the focus of his fictive and thematic interest but, somewhere along the narratorial way, the act of telling takes over the teller, itself becoming larger than life, larger than itself even, to become a philosophical via media for effecting and his craft. (EOF 313)

In the novel different narrations from different parts of the world, Italy and India meet and fuse and form intertwined stories. They not only travel across space but also across time, generations. These stories build up body as they travel from one continent to another continent. They establish continuities. Moreover, Rushdie traces through the travelling stories “the genesis and the history of the forces of globalization and the problems” that they bring in their wake. Though the novel is fully set in historical past time, it exhibits the present time as a result of the East and the West coming face to face with each other in the novel. According to Dersiewicz, the novel is, “the purest expression of his fabulating impulse set in a faraway time, the 1500s, and dividing its pages between two storied lands... Rushdie is working here with the twinned
powers of erotic charm and artistic imagination. Men enslave women and are enslaved by in turn” (2).

The structure of the novel seems to portray the fictional world of cross continental renaissance which is full of stories in digression become a bridge between two cultures. This is exhibited through the coupling of two prototypes cum archetypes like polyglot Mogor and imaginable Qara Koz. History is a collection of past events. Rushdie, Tharoor, Ghosh, Chandra and Sanghi revise their view of the past on the basis of their present time. This is exhibited in a detailed manner in Chanakya’s Chant. In this sense, there is a degree of fluidity in history that is useful to these fictional writers. History is never entirely factual as Hayden White and others have critiqued. In The Enchantress of Florence Rushdie is capable of making history into a fantasy.

And here again with bright silks flying like banners from red palace windows was Sikri, shimmering in the heat like an opium vision. Here at last with its strutting peacocks and dancing girls was home. If the war torn world was a harsh truth then Sikri was a beautiful lie. The emperor came home like a smoker returning to his pipe. He was the Enchanter. In this place he would conjure a new world, a world beyond religion, region, rank and tribe. The most beautiful women in the world were here and they were all his wives. The most brilliant talents in the land were assembled here, among them the Nine stars, the nine most brilliant of the most brilliant, and with their help there was nothing he could not accomplish. With their help his Wizardry would magic all the land, and the future, and all eternity. An emperor was a bewitcher of the real, and with such accomplices his witchcraft could not fail. The songs of Tansen could break open the seals of the universe and let divinity through into everyday world. The poems of Faizi opened windows in the heart and mind through which both light and darkness could be seen. (EOF 53-54)

Thus, Rushdie fictionalises historical events “facts” in order to bring subjectivity in the narrative of the novel. All the selected novels deal with contemporary time from the perception of past time in order to visualize the future time better. Rushdie hopes to usher in through cultural plurality and hybridity which form a sort of avant garde literature. Rushdie expresses his hope in The Moor’s Last Sigh about the future time. He says:

Baba Sahib...we will cook up the happy future. We will mash its spices and peel garlic cloves, we will count out its cardamoms and chop its ginger, we will heat up ghee of the
future and fry its masala to release its flavour. Joy! We will cook the past and present also, and from it tomorrow will come. (MLS 273).

Similarly, Rushdie has extensively dealt with the concept of time. The novel presents story within story like mirror image in the novel which interweaves, moves back and forth across time and space. The novel forms a platform for the fictionalized Akbar the Great, to ponder over the deep questions of humanity: individual, group, art, religion, culture, politics and time. He is both politically powerful as well as intellectually great. Rushdie explores the concept of time and the imagination or metaphysical reality through the fictional character. Akbar the Great and the city in which he has ruled appear imaginary. The real things which are related to space – time seem as fantasy, “Sikri would always look like a mirage” (EOF 33). They cross “the border between sanity and delirium, between what was fanciful and what was real” (33). Rushdie has made the imaginary things happen more real than the real ones. He creates an imaginary character, Jodha which is often related to historical character.

Even the emperor succumbed to fantasy. Queens floated within his palaces like ghosts...One of these royal personages did not really exist. She was an imaginary wife, dreamed up by Akbar in the way that lonely children dream up imaginary friends, and in spite of the presence of many living...the emperor was of the opinion that it was the real queens who were the phantoms and the non-existent beloved who was real. (EOF 33)

Most of the characters in the novel including the nine stars, that is, the nine great countries under Akbar’s regime, acknowledge her existence, her beauty, and her wisdom, the grace of her movements and the softness of her voice. On the other hand, Akbar has never referred to himself as “I” but as “We”. By referring to himself as “We”, he means himself as an incarnation of all his subjects, of all his cities, lands, rivers, mountains, lakes, the animals, plants and trees.

He meant himself as the sum total of all his victories, himself as containing the characters, the abilities, the histories, perhaps even the souls of his decapitated or merely pacified opponents...as the apogee of his people’s past and present, and the engine of their future. (EOF 38-39)

Akbar realizes as an individual existing in the space and time through the recognition of this idea of self-as-community which makes the existence in time, to be a being in the world...inevitably a being among other beings, a part of the beingness of all things” (EOF 39). K. Srilata refers to this as ‘magical world of mirrors”. She observes that in the novel ‘Rushdie delves into the minds
of historical characters such as Akbar to string together a multi-themed narrative about time, travel, identity, power, desire and story-telling” (The Hindu, Sunday, May 4, 2008).

Rushdie presents time as experience by creating Akbar who indulges in dual timing. He experiences the metaphorical time and makes others believe it. On the other hand he wrestles with the representation of actual time in his contemporary time as well as the spatio-temporality of story time of Mogor d’Amor. Rushdie’s fictions display challenge to historical time. He uses magic realism in order to alter conventional senses of time through multiple improbable, logic-defying narrative episodes.

In the creation of imaginary wife, Jodhabai, Akbar talks all the personal matters concerning politics, religion and culture. The conversation happens in the empty space of conventional time. As far as Akbar is concerned the conversation is mutual. Jodha says Akbar concerning the East-West mystery.

Yes: this place, Sikri, was a fairyland to them, just as their England and Portugal, their Holland and France, were beyond her ability to comprehend. The world was not at all one thing. ‘We are their dream’, she had told the emperor, ‘and they are ours’. She loved him because he never dismissed her opinions, never swatted them away with the majesty of his hand. (EOF 60)

Rushdie presents a fictional world which touches the fringes of historical events rather in a fictitious manner. These fictional historical worlds are narrated through story forms. Here, ‘the willing suspension of disbelief’ is more appropriate. The story of The Enchantress of Florence is told by Vespucci, the story he himself believes. He wants to convey the truthfulness of the story to Akbar as well. However Akbar likes to hear him. The entire novel is more than being a fine story, it is about how to create a fictional world across space and time, being history, fiction, imagination, lie, at the same time, a story that enchants and entertains readers. In connection with this Engelbert Jorissen says of the novel:

There the lie, more politely absolute fiction is created, and on the other hand the generation problem is made to understand, that is perhaps one more major point of the novel, how to combine, at that age even geographically, historically different places and times. Ago Vespucci, Argalia, Machia, at the beginning of their friendship to their old age, the journey with princess Qara Koz from Machiavelli’s Times’s Italy to the so called New World, that is America, and from there to India, behind that lies the long story of
Qara Koz, with for example, her arrival in Ottoman Turkey, at the heyday of Ottoman Tulipomania. (71)

Rushdie uses magic realism which makes timelines blurring in every context. In this novel, he interweaves actual historical events with fantastic and dreamlike elements as well as with materials derived from myths and fairytales. On the contrary, Rushdie does not both about this distinction as it is evident in Akbar’s natural self. He describes the emperor’s wrath: “The gathering fell into a silent terror, for Akbar in a rage was capable of anything, he could suck down the sky with his bare hands or he could suck out your soul and drown it in a bowl of your bubbling blood” (EOF 51). On the other hand, his creation of Jodha is drawn inside the less concrete world of magic realism. She is a character known to have existed in history. On the contrary Rushdie presents her in the present time. “She was a woman without a past, separate from history, or, rather, possessing only such history as he had been please to bestow upon her” (EOF 61). The other real wives of Akbar contest the existence of Jodha. The spacio-temporality and the existence of Jodha are fully imaginary which Akbar creates reality. The conventional eyes do not recognize it. “His mother and Queen, Marian-Uz-Zamani, his senior, actually existing wife, detested him too, but they lacked imagination and opposed all intrusions of dream-worlds into the real” (EOF 393).

Akbar, after listening to stories of Qara Koz narrated by Mogor d’Amor, he falls silent. “Across time and space, he was falling in love” (EOF 298). Qara Koz has started to visit Akbar’s private room instead of Jodha. “A different woman visited him, Qara Koz, Lady Black Eyes” (EOF 388). Akbar realizes his metaphysical time conquering him.

He was bent on the sounds of the future and she was an echo from the distant past. Perhaps that was what lured him, her nostalgic gravity; in which case she was indeed a dangerous soreness, who would drag him backwards in every way, in his ideas, his beliefs, his hopes. (EOF 389)

Qara Koz is merely an imaginary figure in the story, though she is a historical character, told by the narrator. The citizens of the Empire have ‘formed an unfavourable impression of Jodha” (EOF 410). “Qara Koz had quickly become the people’s princess, whereas Jodha had always been an aloof and distant queen” (EOF 410). Rushdie presents in this historical novel that mirrors contemporary sensibilities and apprehensions “before the real and unreal were segregated forever and doomed to live apart under different monarchs and separate legal systems” (EOF 324). Andy Johnson reviews this novel, “a fictional story that incorporates
meticulous research and real history-the stranger’s story mingles truth and untruth until the two cannot be separated”. He goes on to say about the novel, “Though the location has been lost, the chamber itself actually did exist in Sikri, a discovery that helped Rushdie and that he says was of ‘colossal’ importance in India’s history”. Rushdie himself says the purpose of writing this particular novel concerns mostly the face-to-face relationship between the East and the West. He says:

Both the cultures of India and Europe were very rich and were going through a very rich phase and yet they were more or less entirely unknown to each other. And I thought if I could find a story which put them in contact with each other it would be almost like the science fiction form we call first contact, where we first meet the alien civilization” (quoted in Andy Johnson).

There is a tension between the actual space time and the space-time created by Akbar. On the other hand, there is also tension between travelling and staying at home, between a heterotopology and a topology. This makes the characters to be at conflicting ends to the space and time. Akbar has a sense of travel to wage battles invariably most of the time. Dana Badulescu observing this novel says that, “it is liminality and insubstantiality that give problematic “substance” to an equally protean sense of identity” (4). For instance, when Akbar orders Dashwanth, the painter to paint his second dream lover, the hidden “dream woman” Qara Koz/Lady Black Eyes/Angelica/Angelique the enchantress, the painter paints her at that same time falls in love with her. In magic realist way, Dashwanth vanishes into his own painting.

Dashwanth’s own characteristic way of looking, and he surmised that this dolorous countenance might be the artists way of inserting himself into the tale of the hidden princess. But Dashwanth had gone further than that...he had somehow managed to vanish. He was never seen again not in the Mughal court, nor anywhere in Sikri, nor anywhere in all the land of Hindustan (EOF 158).

Birbal, one of the wisest of Akbar’s courtiers solves the mystery of disclosing the presence of Dashwanth in the painting’s frame has been removed. On the other hand, Akbar orders that the border be put back and Dashwanth is allowed to have some peace.

Dashwanth released into the only world in which he now believed, the world of the hidden princess, whom he had created and who had then uncreated him...Instead of bringing a fantasy woman to life, Dashwanth had turned himself into an imaginary
being...If the borderline between the worlds could be crossed in one direction, Akbar understood, it could also be crossed in the other. A dreamer could become his dream. ‘Put the border back’, Akbar commanded, “and let the poor fellow have some peace”. (EOF 159)

Rushdie displays Foucaultian heterotopia, ‘the spaces of otherness’, which are neither here nor there, simultaneously physical and mental, for example, Akbar’s imaginary wives Jodha, Qara Koz, and Qara Koz and her mirror. Foucault says, “We are at a moment when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skin”. He distinguishes between utopias and heterotopias. According to him utopias are sites with no real place. On the other hand, heterotopias are places different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about. However, he brings a unity or a space where the Utopias and heterotopias meet, “a sort of mixed, joint experience, “which is the mirror image in the sense of Foucault and Borges. Akbar himself distances himself with the space in actual life indulging in mirror life. Qara Koz is assisted by her mirror. Mogor D’Amor is born of the Mirror’s mirror. Foucault says that “the mirror is, after all a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself these where I’m not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface”. In Homi Bhabha’s sense, *The Enchantress of Florence* is a metaphor of dissemination, not just one moment, but recurring moments of “the scattering of the people that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering...other worlds lived retroactively” (Bhabha 139).

Although the novelists’ representations are from histories, past events and cultural histories of the pastime, the visualization of the readers upon the narrative takes place in the present. The novelists are capable of taking the readers to the lived experience. The past events are brought in repeatedly to live in the mind of the readers who are kept always in the present reading the novel. The time is represented as past and future fuse into the present revealing its eternal status. It is the long present stretches from time immemorial to till time. It is always present. This concept is explained well by St. Augustine. He says:

Yet I say with confidence that I know that if nothing passed away, there would be no past time; and if nothing were still coming, there would be no future time; and if there nothing at all, there would be no present time. But, then, how is it that there are two times, past and future, when even the past is now no longer and future is now not yet? But if the present were always present, and did not pass into past time, it obviously would not be
time but eternity. If, then, time present – if it be time – comes into existence only because it passes into past, how can we say that even this is, since the cause of its being is that it will cease to be? Thus, can we not truly say that time is only as it tends toward nonbeing? (Conf 11. 14 Outler 224-25)

At the end of the novel, Mogor d’Amor narrates stories about Mundus Novus, the New World, “the erratic, in that half-uncharted territory of Time” (EOF 414). Rushdie describes the new world where the ordinary laws of actual world and its space and time do not apply. The space and time are capable of expanding to one day and shrinking to few hours immediately there by forming the earth ‘either to double or halve’. The European explores and the locals those who have learnt European languages recognize that ‘theirs was a world without change, a place of stasis, outside time’ (EOF 415).

The story tells that the philosophers blame the European voyages for bringing time to the New World. Because of this the new world has changes so “in time,” people in Mundus Novus said, ‘there will be time’. The people of the New World have to accept in their present situation ‘the fluctuating nature of new world’ (EOF 415). This shows the domination of the Europeans over the native people in control over the New World’s space and time. Rushdie exhibits similar concept of time in The Moor’s Last Sigh and Midnight’s Children. Saleem submits in Midnight’s Children that “no people whose word for ‘yesterday’ is the same as their word for ‘tomorrow’ can be said to have a firm grip on the time” (MC 123). Similarly the protagonist of The Moor’s Last Sigh observes ‘There is a certain endemic vagueness in Bombay on the subject of time past: ask a man how long he’s been in business and he’ll answer, ‘Long’-Very well, Sir, how old is your house?-‘old’. From old time” (MLS 180). Rushdie presents how the modern clock time control the world as he says “now the remorseless ticktock reasserts itself”. (MC 128). He describes the effect of the European clock in The Enchantress of Florence as:

The most alarming effect of this chronological uncertainty was that time could run at different speeds for different people, even within families and households, children would age faster than their parents until they looked older than their progenitors. For some of the conquerors, sailors and settlers there never seemed to be enough time in the day. For others there was all the time in the world. (EOF 416)

In this New world, Akbar has an opinion after listening to the story, ‘that the lands of the west were exotic and surreal to a degree incomprehensible to the humdrum people to the East” (EOF 416). The worship of gold has become “their history’s driving force”. On the other hand
Qara Koz can enchant and ‘force the history of the world into the course she required it to take’ (EOF 422). ‘She learned how to arrest time’ (EOF 426). Although she enchants the people of the New world, Turks and Akbar, Rushdie describes her that “the princess was actually entering the book, moving out of the world of earth, air and water and entering a universe of paper and ink, that she would sail across the Ocean Sea and arrive not at Espanola in *Mundus Novus* but in the pages of a story”. (EOF 423-4)

On the contrary, Akbar the Great does not believe in the stories of Mogor d’Amore and his claim as son Qara Koz. Akbar is conceived that Niccola Vespucci is “the offspring of an amoral liaison could not be recognized as a member of the royal family” (EOF 431). Niccolo Vespucci is permitted to remain in the city but should not refer to himself by the sobriquet ‘Mogor dell’Amore’ (EOF 432). Akbar wants to meet him after two years, but he is informed that the house of Skanda is burned and probably Mogor dell’Amore might have died. Commenting on his death Rushdie seems to show his longing for stories and finds the abrupt ending.

He had crossed over into the empty page after the last page, beyond the illuminated borders of the existing world, and had entered the universe of the undead, those poor souls whose lives terminate before they stop breathing. The emperor at the lakeside wished the Mughal of Love a gentle after life and a painless ending; and turned away. (EOF 435)

At the end of the novel, Akbar feels sad. He realizes that he has judged him wrong and has failed to recognize the foreigner. As a result of this, Akbar believes that there is a curse on the city. That is the reason why the water in the lake dries. ‘The death of the lake was the death of Sikri as well’ (EOF 436). Rushdie presents the plight of Mughals. ‘Mughals had been nomads before and could be nomads again’ (EOF 437). They have to leave the rich place for want of water. Akbar feels sad about the present condition. However his worries are about the future. Rushdie describes the vision of Akbar concerning Muslims in India which have come true in the contemporary India.

It was the future that had been cursed, not the present. In the present he was invincible. He could build ten new Sikris if he pleased. But once he was gone, all he had thought, all he had worked to make, his philosophy and way of being all that would evaporate like water. The future would not be what he hoped for, but a dry hostile antagonistic place where people would survive as best they could and hate their neighbours and smash their
places of worship and kill one another once again in the renewed heat of the great quarrel he had sought to end forever, the quarrel over God. In the future it was harshness, not civilization, that would rule. (EOF 439-40)

Akbar cannot bear the reality of the present and the events of future. In his disappointment, his second dream lover Qara Koz comes ‘as if life was a river...She had crossed the liquid years and returned to command his dreams, usurping another woman’s place in his Khayal, his god like omnipotent fancy’...‘I have come home after all’, she told him. ‘You have allowed me to return, and so here I am, at my journey’s end. And now, shelter of the world, I am yours’ (EOF 442-43). In the novel Rushdie displays once again his interest in history, time and place by making supernatural alive through the power of storytelling. The storytellers themselves become the enchantress/ers who have the most power of all people. The novel portrays characters in one location or time which have mirrors in another. Similarly, historical events occur and recur. Issues concerning religion, identity, truth, nation, self-etc., are brought in which throw a vital significance bearing the issues of contemporary time. In other words, Akbar’s prediction of Mughals have come true. The past events repeat itself in some other ways. As T.S. Eliot says that “the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence.” (Tradition and Individual Talent)

Sense/perception of time differs from novelist to novelist. Rushdie keeps on shifting the time setting. Tharoor, Chandra and Shangi talk about cyclical time which is exhibited through an Indian way of storytelling. Sense of time shifts from the recent past to remote past, and present to mythical past. They also assert that the present events have already taken place in the past. And through such a perception of time, the writers even try to give a solution for the contemporary cultural/political/religious crisis.