Chapter VI

History–Fiction: Conclusion

[Contemporary Indian English Fiction has interfaced with] history...to discover the complex and intricate network of relationships between literature and its conditions of production characteristic of the age; to see the text in terms of the essential struggles and embattled situations in society; to understand the political, cultural and ideological currents that impact on the making of literature; and above all to discuss how cultural plurality, multilingual situations, intertextuality within culture, etc., overlap in the creation of literary traditions. (Rajan 356)

Indian Writing in English has come to be widely recognized through the serious and committed efforts of authors of both pre and post-independence India alike. However, for the most part, the considerable corpus of work of the post-independence novelists of Indian origin writing in English has focused their attention on India’s past and present history in order to (re)construct/challenge/interrogate the ideas of nation, identity, culture and sense of place and time. Since this focus has been pioneered by Salman Rushdie’s monumental Midnight’s Children, the entire Indian Writing in English can be categorized as pre-Rushdian and post-Rushdian and this could act as a framework for fruitful analyses of the novels selected for study. Along with Rushdie, the authors chosen for this dissertation [Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Chandra and Aswin Sanghi] have been read taking into account this Rushdian phenomenon. These authors engage with and foreground history continuously in their works and problematize the conventional notions of narrative as a history/fiction binary. This has been clearly dealt with in the preceding chapters. While their works could not be christened as historical fiction in the sense of Georg Lukacs or Walter Scott, it is evident from the close analyses undertaken by the researcher that they negotiate between ‘contingency and possibility’ of histories. In this light, their fictions could be considered as postmodern historical novels or meta historiographic novels or history-fictions.
It has been demonstrated, from the close readings of the works, how the select novelists have dealt with history by using narrative modes and literary techniques which have been elaborately theorized and discussed in the earlier sections of this research. The crux of the thesis, as has been pointed out earlier, is not to accuse or to expose historian’s supposedly unauthentic portrayal of history or to produce any periodized views of time or even to question historical details, there-by producing another version of history, but rather to contextualize how the contemporary Indian novelists have used their imagination, memory and freedom in choosing the past and interpreting it, shaping it as they fancy, in relation to contemporary issues, in order to chronicle time present and time past as two parallel and interfacing continuum. There is, often enough, a lot of flexibility and elasticity on the part of the novelists in adopting the historical details. They have brought their own contemporary experience, change, and human condition within the corpus of their writings.

The arguments in the previous chapters have demonstrated the authors’ engagement with history. The pastness of the past is rendered the presentness of the present through multiple points of view. This provides the readers the “now experience” of past events which have a double benefit i.e., not only to (re)negotiate the past and re-interpret it in the light of current events evolving through the present time but also to make a foray into the possibilities and the probabilities of future events as well, including their repercussions on the traditional history and contemporary history-fiction. The overlapping of history and fiction has drawn our awareness to the contemporary history and politics and their making. In connection with this Makarand Paranjape says:

Our multiple pasts, many of which are thankfully still with us, tell us of the grandeur and the pathos of the human enterprise, of its enormous resources of hope and also its tremendous follies and sorrows. If this story were seen as one of unending and repetitive dukka, then the present, indeed presence itself with its unrelenting metaphysics of being, would be so inexorably oppressive as to suggest its radical negation in an eternal anti–foundationalism... This meaning of presence is inherent in the word itself–present means being, that is, being at a specified time and place, being at hand, being available or in attendance. (Paranjape 20)

It is evident from the research, that the contemporary novelists see the past in the present. The present being demanding by its very presence gets the full attention of the writers. Hence, it is the writers’ concern/earnestness about the present cultural/political/religious and historical
context that comes through their presentation of the past. The select authors draw our entire attention through a cinematic narration of the past events infusing it into the present enabling us to experience the presence, which is, ‘being at a specified time and place’.

The first Chapter provides a detailed and comprehensive background information and various concepts of history by drawing upon the variant views of historians and philosophers and they are analyzed in the light of current theories on the history-fiction interface. It outlines an over-view of the theoretical perspectives that involve in shaping/changing/manifesting the interrelatedness and the rendering of history-fiction/historical fiction in contemporary society.

This chapter has reviewed the history of history and the unstable and problematic status of history in the contemporary context. The study of history, its understanding and interpretation have become more dynamic in the contemporary world than in the past. Scholars from different areas of research have held diametrically opposing and sometimes radically different points of view. Critics have accused the fact that the recording of history, where deliberate falsehood, inconsistency, errors of fact and judgment, undue credulity and easy acceptance of unreliable sources of information dominate in any historical narration, has become rather like, to use the Baudrillardian term, a simulacrum or even a hyperreality. As discussed in the first chapter, novelists who engage with history (which comprises place, time, culture, narratives and action) like Salman Rushdie, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Vikram Chandra, Amitav Ghosh and Shashi Tharoor, participate in this image-making endeavour of creating a make-believe history. The first part of this chapter has attempted to explain the concept and conceptual shifts in the idea of history and historicism and historiography followed by the second part, which has focused on meta-fiction and historiographic meta-fiction. The theoretical perspectives of Arnold J. Toynbee, E.H. Carr, Paul Ricoeur, Michel Foucault, Hayden White, Fredric Jameson, Linda Hutcheon, T.N Dhar, and Paul Sharrad have been adopted in order to bring history-fiction interface and an attempt has been made to understand the literary nature of history by using their critical contributions. The third part of this chapter has focused on the general literary techniques used by the contemporary novelists in writing their postmodern fictions and historical fictions like irony, playfulness, black humour, intertextuality, pastiche, metafiction, fabulation, historiographic metafiction, temporal distortion, magic realism, technoculture and hyperreality, and paranoia. The final part of the chapter has dealt with fictional world and historical world, and time and chronotopicality.
Fourteenth century historians and philosophers insist on the speculation and literary expressions. Ibn Khaldun, a Muslim who is considered to be “the greatest historian and philosopher ever produced by Islam and one of the greatest of all time” (quoted in Warrington) talks about the speculative method while writing history by asking “how and why” of events. Similarly, Jean Froissart, a French poet, romance writer and historian of chivalry expresses literary preoccupations dominating in the process of recording history. In the same vein Giambattista Vico, Italian political philosopher, rhetorician, historian, and jurist, suggests that any person making statements of ‘the past must never automatically be accepted for historical truth’. He talks about the critical examination of words, myths, tradition and rituals in order to arrive at historical truth. In this sense, they are part of a large canvass of history and it might be apparent that they are instrumental in “writing” a history but an alternative view could be that the authors may not have taken or used history to write a fiction but it is as if history has chosen these authors to re-write itself in the present context.

According to Jeffrey Kahan, a Professor of English at the University of La Verne in Southern California, *historicism focuses on a specific context which comprises historical period, geographical place and local culture*. Hence, it is different from empiricism and rationalism which ignore the role of traditions. Paul Hamilton too stresses the same idea in his book *Historicism*.

The attempt to discover truth in history is an unending one because as Michel Foucault says in his 1971 essay ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’. “If the genealogist refuses to extend his faith in metaphysics, if he listens to history, he finds that there is ‘something altogether different’ behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence’. (Foucault 76-100)

Similarities and distinctions are made between history and literature. The interrelatedness of these two disciplines has existed from ancient time onwards. The distinctions among the historians and their notions/understanding of history are explained. The thinkers who have tried to link history with literature are brought to the forefront. In contemporary world, the light of scientific history and authenticated history is dimmed before the brightness of novelized history/historicized fiction. The idea of history from ‘Father of History/Lies’ to Hayden White is referred such as both thinkers and historians, Herodotus, Ibn Khaldun, Jean Froissart, Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx, Frederick Jackson Turner, Martin Heidegger, Arnold J. Toynbee, E.H. Carr, Paul Ricoeur, Francis Fukuyama and Hayden White and some feminist
historians, such as Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Joan Wallach Scott, Sheila Rowbotham are also mentioned in this chapter. The concept of Meta-narrative from Hayden White and Linda Hutcheon and the concept of New Historicism from Michel Foucault and Stephan Greenblatt are taken into account to add a stronger framework to the thesis. It also has explained how theory takes off from New Criticism to Deconstruction, from Historicism to New Historicism and Reader Response Theory in the interpretation of the text on the part of reader. It has traced the progressive developmental changes that have been taking place in the employment of history and the proximity accomplished between historians and novelists. It has highlighted how these techniques help the readers to form an imaginary world filled with histories which help them to form and understand *histories* in the contemporary contexts. According to Ashis Nandy, history, as a modern myth, “selects for us what should be remembered on grounds of objectivity. Myths, as self-consciously selective memories, not only aid memory but also select for us what should be forgotten on ground of compassion (25). Therefore, according to Linda Hutcheon “historiographic metafiction” works “to situate itself in history and in discourse, as well as to insist on its autonomous fictional and linguistic nature” (xiv). By “historiographic metafiction” Hutcheon means “those well known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages, […and to] the theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs” (23). The contemporary novelists of post-independence India have displayed the above mentioned literary techniques in order to show “the degree of self-consciousness within the fiction” and simultaneously to highlight how these fictions are meditated by “contextual forces, including its historical, social, and ideological determination” thereby showing us the “contextualized production and reception of meaning”. (Hutcheon xv)

In the second chapter, “Literature and History: Towards History-Fiction”, the researcher has clearly shown that the conception of history, fiction, narrative, and discourse analysis is inextricably intertwined with the theories of fiction and fiction making. Having explained the proposed title and clarifying the meaning of “Chronicles of Time present” and “Time past” and the characteristics of historical novel and history-fiction, the researcher went on to provide a cursory textual evidences of this intertwining phenomenon. Furthermore, the historical novel has been differentiated from various other groups of novels such as the picaresque novel, the gothic and sentimental novel, the documentary novel, standard historical novel or realist novel and the industrial novel in order to clearly differentiate them from the present subject matter. To this end, the historical novels were analyzed and theorized in the light of the theories proposed by Avrom
Fleishman, F J Ticker and Georg Lukacs. According to Georg Lukacs, historical novel can be termed which concentrates on “the poetic awakening of the people who figured in those events. What matters is that we should re-experience the social and human motives of which led men to think, feel and act just as they did in historical reality” (42).

The historian Herbert Butterfield and the literary critic Avrom Fleishman have tried to define historical novel. Their discussions have been taken to identify the select authors’ engagement with history. According to Herbert Butterfield, historical novel is a work that attempts to “reconstruct a world, to particularize, to catch a glimpse of human nature”. On the contrary, Avrom Fleishman defines it that “what makes a historical novel historical is the active presence of a concept of history as a shaping force” (15). In the third part, literature and history are focused in order to show the interrelatedness. Then the manner fiction and history overlapping is foregrounded. In the last part, Indian novelists’ engagement with history is dealt.

It introduces literature, history, and their interrelatedness concurrently defining the relevance of history-fiction in contemporary world. Fiction can be defined as “fiction about fiction: novels and stories that call attention to their fictional status and their own compositional procedures” (Lodge 1992: 206). Fiction is a literary narrative based on invented events, which have not happened in actual life. The unreal and imaginary telling of events is called fictions in general. In a specific sense, fiction stands for only narratives that are written in prose such as novel, short story; sometimes fiction is used as a synonym for the novel. Among the literary narratives, fiction stands to ‘a prominent degree based on biographical, historical, or contemporary facts’ (Abrams). Narrative is a combination of plot, character, dialogue, genre, ideology, language and identity. It is ‘a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process and change’ (Herman 3).

In the narrative process, the authors use language, which goes beyond the required communicative expression. Such language/expressions are focused in order to analyze those patterns of linguistic expression across in texts highlighting the relationship between such language and the social and cultural contexts in which it is used. This analysis is called discourse analysis. “Discourse analysis also considers the ways that the use of language presents different views of the world and different understandings. It examines how the use of language is influenced by relationships between participants as well as the effects the use of language has upon social identities and relations. It also considers how views of the world, and identities, are constructed through the use of discourse” (Paltridge 2). Discourse analysis examines both spoken
and written texts. At one point in *Chanakya’s Chant*, the author uses language such a way that it generalizes the people of particular region. For instance, 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 tomt you’...Gangasagar ‘then realized that the south Indian was saying that he was *honoured to meet him*’ (CC 144). The representation of Indian identity in *Amar Chitra Katha* is as subaltern historians such as Gyanendra Pandey have pointed out, that there is subtle “equation of the history of the Hindus with the history of India” (Pandey 369).

The researcher has highlighted the interdisciplinary nature of literature. As mentioned earlier (Velcheru Narayana Rao), most of the regional literature in India had started with narratives in which history and literature were inseparable; and they were the best forms of narrative technique. Indian Fiction in English has been engaging with history (Toru Dutt, Freedom Writers, the Big Three). However, earlier writers in Indian fiction in English have dealt with history in tune with mainstream and western way of chronicling history. On the other hand, the post independence fiction writers of India engage with history, rather play with it. They use and abuse history bringing out its elastic nature. In the researcher’s finding, these select novelists foreground the locale, sense of time and the essence of people from the forgotten history and render meaning to the culture and histories of the “considered insignificant” people through their make-believe history. Through the reading, the researcher has fielded out the literary nature of history, and literature in this sense is history that contributes its truth in its own way. Literature and history mutually share ideas. Thus, the imagined history from literature cannot be pooh-poohed considering as something trivial written merely for entertainment. Literature also provides serious/true value of history although it is also subject to change as history is, according to the context.

In Chapter III, the researcher has explained the sense of place and the vital role of history in shaping place in the contemporary context. In this chapter Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of poppies* and *The Hungry Tide*, and Salman Rushdie’s *The Moor’s Last Sigh* are focused on the treatment of sense of place. In Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of poppies* almost all the characters feel the sense of place in fact long for the locality where they come from and where they miss it. The *Ibis*, the ship becomes an alternate place for people to form their new identities and new communities as well. The colonial sense of place gives an impression in the present to alter the notion of place and history of place at present. The same author’s *The Hungry Tide* questions the sense of place where the place becomes dislocated with eternal displacements and departures. The analysis of
the text, *Sea of poppies* shows how the colonial footprints have damaged by opium cultivation and slave trading the fertile farm lands of India, especially, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and thereby forcing the farmers to leave their belongings and home to find a living in Mauritius and other parts of the world. The chapter also talks about the loss of history, culture, religion at the same time the blurring of histories, cultures, religions, castes as the place changes by endless departure and arrival. The geographical position is like mother to each character. The refugees in *The Hungry Tide* are seen invisible by the Indian government as well as the people of India. The place of rootedness becomes problematic and it is denied to the refugees the right to live in the planet even along with the unpredictable sea and animals. They try to find their survival in the Sundarban islands with striking balance with nature.

History consists of place, time and characters like Aristotelian theatrical mode: the beginning, the middle and the end: place, time and action. Most of the characters exhibit their connection with place, which gives identity, consolation and belonging. The sense of place is disturbed/distorted over time. As time passes by the geographical appearance also changes. This leads to the transformation of characters as Piya finds, “the Guest House” as “home” (HT 399), Qora Koz discovers her historical place as, “I have come home after all”, (EOF 442). In Ghosh’s novels, the research has been done how our perceptions of possessed land/identity, as well as boundaries/borders keep changing. As it is evident from the earlier chapters, the idea of Clefford that Ghosh tries to bring our attention through his novels the complex ‘roots’ and ‘routes’. His writings bring the relationship between cultures. Most of the characters in the select novels move as Clifford says, “everyone is on the move, and they have been for centuries: dwelling—in—place” (8). This travel creates new histories in *The Hungry Tide*, *Sea Of Poppies* and *The Moor’s Last Sigh* and *The Enchantress of Florence*. Travel exposes new places and helps to chronicle new histories. This leads to characters involvement/engagement with place, time and action. On the other hand, characters experience in action in a new place, compare it with the past events, and live the past in the present in a different location. In connection with this, Robert Dixon rightly says of Ghosh: “The fact that Amitav Ghosh has been able to move freely in his writing between anthropology, history and fiction is symptomatic of the extent to which traditional boundaries between those disciplines have themselves broken down”. (13)

Ghosh has given a lot of emphasis on the nature of human existence, which draws our attention to the local rather than global. *The Hungry Tide* and *Sea of Poppies* concentrate on characters like Fokir, Kusum and Kaluva, Deeti, slaves and coolies who appear and disappear without touching the edges of official history. Most of the characters in the select novels seem
more “to underscore the fragility of our brief time on earth” (Hawley 134). As far as the official history/records are concerned, these characters are nothing and considered as unimportant individuals. They are neglected. They are voiceless people. That is the reason why, John C. Hawley says, “Ghosh spills a lot of ink on their behalf, as if to record their personal histories” (135) with much details. Ghosh has displayed in his fictions several histories, identities, inter–castes, interreligious, inter–linguistic, crossing borders which proclaim the issues of contemporary political situation of India in particular and the universe in general.

In Sea of Poppies, Ghosh has argued the effect of the imperialism and the tricks of the East India Company. Edward Said says, “To think about distant places, to colonize them, to populate or depopulate them: all of this occurs on about, or because of land” (93). Sea of Poppies is a novel about appropriation of history. It narrates the society, territories, lands, geographical domains, “the actual geographical underpinnings of the imperial, and also the cultural context” (Said 93). Ghosh historicizes the past in the novel. These elements push the novel into the spacio–temporal sphere of the society of 1830s–40s. Ghosh tries to assert that the blurring of identities in all aspects become certain. He problematizes the notion of rigid/distinct/separate boundary, single culture, nation, religion. His idea of human existence rightly fits Said’s notion of culture and identity. Said says:

Human beings make their own history; they also make their cultures and ethnic identities. No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but then seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness as if that was all human life was about. Survival in fact is about the connections between things. (Said 408)

In Salman Rushdie’s The Moor’s Last Sigh, the locations keep shifting from Malabar to Bombay and Andalusia to Cabral Island. It travels across continents from the east to the west. Similar transiting can be found in Salman Rushdie’s latest novel The Enchantress of Florence. There are multiple shifts of location in most of the select novels. The contemporary contextualized readers are given room to understand the location from three or four angles. One, the novelists are shifting from time of writing to colonial time thereby representing time past within the time present and further stretched to readers to connect the sense of location and feel the transition in better manner. This transition is vividly brought out in Vikram Chandra’s Red Earth and Pouring Rain where the location and temporality takes shift from America to India and from contemporary time to mythical time.
It is evident that we could draw from the novels’ engagement of history, which is related to place–time dealing with period and temporality where action shifts from present to past and vice versa. The researcher has found Michel Bakhtin’s concept of “chronotope” as well as Romila Thapar’s concept of “cyclical time” are evident in the select novels. Most of the fictions selected for the study have displayed the cyclical time, which is contrast to the western time concept. Amitav Ghosh’s novels reveal the characters’ relation to time and space which alters according to the setting of the novels in terms of literary and history. In the select novels, the recording of ‘time present’ and ‘time past’ renders the static nature of time and the actions as more or less repeated right from ancient time. The need of the current time is to reflect past time/events which can be traced in Ashwin Sanghi’s Chanakya’s Chant where an ancient historical character Chanakya, the strategist appears in the contemporary India with contemporaries along with all the evils of the politics. The novel is divided in such a way that it reminds one of the sense of time like “About 2300 years ago” (1) and “Present Day” (12). Similar settings of temporality can be found in these novels too. The Great Indian Novel of Shashi Tharoor and Vikram Chandra’s Red Earth and Pouring Rain bring the past temporality into the highly technical world of cricket and cell phone society. The epic characters of Ramayana and Mahabharata appear in the postmodern society repeating the condition/political issues/cunning and corruption of the past time. The act of storytelling in the novels has shown the concept of cyclical time as Sanjay, VV, Saleem, and others self-consciously comment on the act of storytelling. Ved Vyas says at the end of The Great Indian Novel, “I told you stories never end... I have told my story so far from a completely mistaken perspective. I have thought about it, Ganapathi, and I realize I have no choice. I must retell it (GIN 418).

Cyclical time drives the Indian storytelling where history repeats itself as evident in Chanakya’s Chant, Red Earth and Pouring Rain and The Great Indian Novel. The actions of the history are retold through make–believe world where the time is both experienced “now” at the same time serve the time of current affairs of India. On the other hand, Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh, in the researcher’s findings display multiple histories, histories of the voiceless, minority, and the unimportant individuals.

The uses of history promote the characters in order to formulate ideological shifts in the minds of the readers. Salman Rushdie’s The Enchantress of Florence traces the character, Qara Koz who has been deleted from Indian history by the Emperor Babur himself. The adventures of the imagined historical characters reveal the eroticism of the west too. In Ashwin Sanghi’s Chanakya’s Chant the character, Chanakya is focused with his strategies and scheming to the
present day politics. Nothing has changed especially the human relations in public affairs right from ancient mythology, which can be traced in The Great Indian Novel and Red Earth and Pouring Rain by Shashi Tharoor and Vikram Chandra. These novels present historical characters in order to demonstrate the readers that the condition of human mind does not take any holistic change rather it evolves in corruption and cunningness at the same time the values of the past are kept alive by some characters. These novels may seem pessimistic in theme when they are profoundly scrutinized. However, the hardcore reality is to present the present time in the light of the past time, which these novelists succeed in rendering such temporality. One of Salman Rushdie’s characters namely Akbar says in The Enchantress of Florence that “Not that we are so different from one another, but we are so alike” (original italics) (171). Most of the select authors live outside of India and writing about India from their point of view of culture, histories. Their mode of communication is English which is spoken by only a very small amount of people. Hence, the writing of some of the novelists may cater to the needs of the international audience. On the contrary, Amitav Ghosh has always attempted to write bilingually and exclusively in English that mimics the structural pattern of the vernacular of regions that form the backdrop for his narratives.

In the critical scrutiny, the select novels display ‘make–believe’ histories. It is better to live in dream world, opium world, and world of memories of the past than to look for “factual” past. The imagined histories appeal/render values – make us understand the present in the light of the past. The imagined Akbar is heroic, multidimensional, multifaceted and complex, humane and portraying microcosmic human existence as exemplary to the macrocosm, which the official history probably might not satisfy.

Fictions that are branded as non-historical are also historical in a way because they include a sense of time, place and people, which could not be dissociated from the available people, place, and time around them. In this case fictional writers imagine issues related to society and write about fiction where they focus on the theme and settings as well. Their focus may fall on the place thereby touching the fringes of history. Of course, writers’ involvement with place/people naturally brings out the history of the place also. On the whole, fictional writers create fictional world with place, time and action where history is not highlighted but hinted at. On the other hand, the fictional writers of history-fiction create make-believe history where mainstream history is problematized and marginalized history is foregrounded. These authors may not strictly follow the techniques of the historical fiction as earlier mentioned. And
it does not mean that they do not talk about history. On the whole, contemporary Indian fictional writers’ focus is on history although they have all the techniques of non-history fiction.

Another finding from the select novels is that the authors try to retrieve the traditional oral form of storytelling in their fictions which themselves form a series of histories. The act of storytelling not only asserts the tradition but also exhibits the sense of place, sense of time, culture, identity—all of them are always in the process of making. These authors deny the single identity, culture, history, religion, God, and language. Hybridity becomes the working documents of life. In the world of hybridity, one must choose/determine the identity among the plurality of identities, cultures, religions. Amartya Sen says:

People’s relation to Britain, or to India, need not be mediated through the ‘culture’ of the family in which they may have been born, nor through its religion. People may choose to seek identity with more than one of these predefined cultures, or, just as plausibly, with none. People are also free to decide that their cultural or religious identity is less important to them than, say, their political convictions, or their literary persuasions, or their professional commitments. It is a choice for them to make, no matter how they are placed in the ‘federation of cultures’. (356)

Some of the authors have shown the importance of official history/data as evident in their writings. Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and Ashwin Sanghi have given a detailed research of historical facts/data at the end of their fictions in order to claim their truthful status of their fictions. This shows the ever-overlapping nature of literature and history. Thus, history lives by literature and literature depends on history in order to create a make-believe world.

The researcher has taken a diversion from the normal viewpoint in bringing out the fact that history as discipline has taken various stands according to the age and context of the generation. Thus, history has lost its scientific, meticulous truth-value position to one of the point of view position. In this way, it reveals itself that history is more literary and imaginative than the scientific. On the contrary, literature is generally believed to be a work of imagination and is meant to entertain people. However, literature has a flexible tendency to interact with other disciplines. It is evident from the readings that literature always engages with history. The make-believe histories that literature provides become as relevant as history. In addition, there is always room for alteration in the make-believe history that is given by any author.
The select history-fiction writers draw our attention to sense of place, time, action, culture, histories, and spiritual and psychological aspects of the people of the past as well as people of the present. They inject unknowingly integration, morality, freedom, and pride of the nation by indulging in problematizing history, abusing and using it according their purpose. Their engagement with history asserts the significance of past events but they would like to fill the gap of the history creating make-believe history. In this process, contemporary Indian fictional writer have dealt with marginalized culture, histories, serious issues of people like slave trade and opium trade of 1830s and the situation of the Sundrabands and the shadow of colonization on the culture and language of people in Mauritius and other parts of the colonized countries.

It is evident in the reading of the select novels, that it is the need of the hour to focus on history through which these authors exhibit cyclical history, and on Mikhail Bakhtin’ concept of chronotope where sense of time and place are related and co-ordinated through multiple narrative process. The select novels for study provide spatio-temporal unity, which leads to an emotional and intellectual participation in the events that occur in the novels.

However, researchers have seriously close examined the history-fiction nexus earlier. They have focused only on a single author in terms of a single theme as “representation of history”. Alexandra Fiona Barley has explored the geographies of home in contemporary Indian literature in English in, “At Home in India: Geographies of Home in Contemporary Indian Novels”, focusing on identity, self, nation (Barley). Barbara J. Gardner has talked about postcolonial voice, partition and history. The researcher’s title is “Speaking Voices in Postcolonial Indian Novels from Orientalism to Outsourcing” which explores and “identifies how several Postcolonial Indian writers challenge the silence of Orientalism and the power issues of the West through various “speaking voices” of narratives representative of Indian life”. (Gardner)

On the other hand, this project is a pioneering attempt on a comparative scale on the select authors, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Chandra, and Ashwin Sanghi and the study also focuses on the thematic and structural aspects of history-fiction with specific focus on the treatment of history in relation to place, time, action thereby problematizing culture, nature, language and identities in the contemporary Indian context. The characters often reveal the authors’ vision of the world. In a critical analysis of the novels, the treatment of themes and representation of histories reveal that the novels dilute the seriousness-taking place in
the contemporary socio-cultural, religio-political scenario as discussed in other discourses. However, the select authors at the same time kindle multiple questions in terms of histories, cultures, and identities. These authors have created “make-believe” histories differentiating themselves with historical novelists. It reiterates the research project, recapping the novelists’ involvement to fiction and engagement with history, the representation or chronicling of time present and time past through their narrativisation, characterization, uses of critical theories and the imaginative power and the choice of diction. The chapter sums up all the arguments.

Therefore, the thesis concludes that the select authors have engaged with fictional history by its nature and have contested history. They have provided a comprehensive outlook of history, which comprises time past, time present, and future. Rushdie, Tharoor, Ghosh, Chandra and Sanghi have proved their power of storytelling, which has conjured up sense of time, sense of place and peculiar characterization, identity and language. These novelists have historical not histrionic sense with which they analyze those historical events and personages that have affected the lives of individuals, communities, the country and even the subcontinent. They do not use history as a lump but with their “sixth sense” they appropriate, revise and re-interpret history – what happened to them as they saw and experienced and what they were told about it. Like excavators, these novelists employed their historical sense or consciousness as their chisel, spade, scoop and brush to uncover what lay buried underneath the Authorized/Official version of History. They have tried to recover the repressed events and interpreted their versions with their high, stories in as diverse ways as they or their works themselves. In the course of action, the novelists have endeavoured the Re-Discovery of India. In other words, they have shown cultures, customs, climates, geographies, creatures and causalities. Such portrayals help readers adjust or modify their notions about history and to correct their prejudiced opinions about people and places and period and see things more objectively from various points of view.

Borrowing Linda Hucheon’s idea, the thesis has attempted to bring forth the point that we must put our faith in fictions where there is no literal truth. The select novelists affirm in order to subvert, but subvert in order to affirm. The select fictional writers explode the notion of the nation having a stable identity and a single history. Thus, they break the continuity as well as creating a coherent narrative; they rupture the fabric of history only to look for alternative modes of “telling” a story. To achieve this, they draw a sceptical provisional faith in the nation that it has exploded.

Thus, these authors have retrieved from the notion that history is trivial, useless digging of the graves. On the other hand, in the fictions of these authors, history has been rendered a
significant creative touch and multi-coloured portrayal with its other expressions. These fictional writers engage with history positing several narratives by their acts/arts of chronicling the past in their “make–believe” worlds. Robert Penn Warren says in the foreword of Brother to Dragons: A Tale in Verse and Voices (1979) “historical sense and poetic sense [which] ‘should not, in the end, be contradictory, for if poetry is the little myth we make, history is the big myth we live, and in our living, constantly remake”.

This opens up richer areas for future studies. Salman Rushdie’s The Enchantress of Florence and Indu Sundaresan’s The Twentieth Wife can be used for further study in terms of representation of history in Mughal Empire. The representation of history of common person is focused in regional literatures, which strike parallels to Amitav Ghosh’s novels. On this ground, the Tamil writer Su. Venketesan’s Kaval Kottam, the Oriya writer Radhanath Roy and Amitav Ghosh can be compared for further interlinking. The themes and treatment of English language and regional language fiction and meta-fictions, the difficulties and limitations of translation and the mysterious process of communication without language through gaps and lacunae in narrations are certainly the possible areas of study in the contexts of contemporary Indian Writing in English. The line of reading in History-Fiction as pursued in this dissertation thus can be extended hopefully for further studies.