CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION
A discussion of the novels written by post-Modem writers in English makes it clear that their chief concern in writing fiction is to offer an authentic or true picture of India. Many young writers, most of them living outside India, like Shashi Tharoor, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and Rohinton Mistry have made their best efforts to depict India after Independence.

For all the above mentioned writers one event of post-Independence attracted and that was the 'Emergency' declared by Mrs. Indira Gandhi in 1970's. Shashi Tharoor in his 'The Great Indian Novel', Salman Rushdie in his novel 'Midnights Children' and Rohinton Mistry in his 'A Fine Balance' have made a lengthy mention of 'emergency'. These writers think that the 'Emergency' declared by Mrs. Gandhi has remained a black spot on the fact of Indian democracy.

The other important concern of these writers like Shashi Tharoor (The Great Indian Novel) Salman Rushdie (Midnight's
Children) and Amitav Ghosh (The Circle of Reason) is the socio-political situation of contemporary India after Independence.

"History in these three novels is treated with mock-seriousness. These three novelists present a perspectivised history. They portray history as a grand enterprise and gorgeous spectacle. They at times take sportive flights from history in their mock-serious methods. In their chosen irreverence they make the historical personalities a laughing stock of their perspectivised perceptions. The three novelists aim at debunking the myth of the euphoria of Independence. They expose the erosion of the sanctity attached to it, because of the slipshod methods adopted by the post-Independence rulers".1

Tharoor has made sincere effort in interpreting India in all his writings. Even though he was working as a civil servant in United Nations, he never wrote anything related to his official work. All his writings are truly confined to India because he believes "India matters to me, and through my writing, I would like to matter to India".2 Undoubtedly in all his works India matters to him immensely. In his works one can know about the India since the days of Mahabharata, to the present day India which is on the verge of second
division because of communal disturbances and corrupt politicians. Harish Khare appropriately remarks "His self perception is that of a secular, liberal, cosmopolitan, urbane, and globalised Indian; but the India he encounters is full of medieval prejudices carried to their conclusions with the modern tools of violence and hate. He is painfully baffled".3

It can be said that, though Salman Rushdie is the leader of many young crop of Indian writers in English, Shashi Tharoor has made a mark for himself as an important and a true post-modern writer in English.

Tharoor praises India generously but at the same time he is also very critical about the other aspects of it. As he has made it very clear in his 'The Great Indian Novel' that India is a developed state at decaying stage, he almost in all his works tries to highlight what are the things that are on the verge of destroying this country.

Tharoor, in his Midnight to the Millennium emphasises the variety to be found in India and says that India is a vast country and "No other country in the world embraces the extraordinary mixture of
ethnic groups, the profession of mutually incomprehensible languages, the varieties of topography and climate, the diversity of religions and cultural practices, and the range of levels of economic development that India does". The country is so big and so diverse that no two things match each other or get with each other. Yet everything has a space for itself. Tharoor quotes an example of this in his Kerala Gods' Own Country stating that "if Kashmir is all about men and mountains; Kerala is about women and nature". Not only Kashmir and Kerala but even South and North, West and East are different from each other. The south Indians are black, known for their rapid speech, and spicy food, where as North Indians are fair in colour slow in speaking. Tharoor because of this diversity says that no one is 'majority' in this country. To concur Tharoor, Iyer Pico says that "there is probably no country in the world more diverse than India, divided as it is by races, religions, castes and jangled kaleidoscope of special need". Iyer Pico further glorifies the Indian and India by saying "Here was life, not on the grand, but on the epic scale, the Human comedy, the Human tragedy, played on the streets filled with too many people, too many, feelings, too many schemes. India itself was simply too much". Tharoor is also aware of the epic
history of this country but he is not so much interested in what it was? His problem is what and how it should be?

Tharoor becomes an important writer and relevant because he is bothered of today's changing scenario where there are communal conflicts, riots, corruption etc at rampant. He thinks that today's India is "an India of erupting caste and communal conflict, terrorist and secessionist strife, police 'encounters' and an alarming daily toll of human lives in the aftermath of the destruction of the Babri Masjid or the near pogroms in Gujarat". Though these communal clashes and riots existed in India even in the past, they have become very common, in recent times. These riots and tensions are ruining the image of India. Tharoor feels that these things have cropped up because some group of people in India face 'identity crises'. They felt that they are being neglected in their own country. Hence, they started all this game of dirty politics of religion, caste and region.

Shirwadkar K.R, is of the opinion that "India lives by inner prosperity and this inner direction of her living offers to her people an emancipation through the knowledge of the self. India is continuity not in time but in space. She, is more an idea than a reality; hence she
is within us and is everywhere”. Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* supports this statement of Shirwadkar that India is continuity not in time but in space. In the novel ‘*The Great Indian Novel*’ we feel as if the characters of Mahabharata have come alive and are in flesh and blood and are walking on the streets of India. Life in India was always vigourful, people lived here in eternal bliss which was found no where on the earth. To support this Iyer Pico says that “In India, life danced with legend as gracefully as Krishna with the Gopis”.

The image of India can be broadly classified as cultural, social, political and communal image of India.

The cultural image depicted in Tharoor’s works is about India and its humanity. There are two great epics called ‘Ramayana’ and ‘Mahabharata’. Both these epics are the torch bearers of Indian culture. Bhavani Shakuntla says “it is difficult to understand the traditional Indian psyche without understanding our great epic. The Kauravas and Pandavas are archetypal figures, and their experiences are possible patterns of a universal nature. They are relevant today and refresh our memory at each state” and she concludes. This is exactly what *The Great Indian Novel* succeeds in doing. If The
Great Indian Novel, tells about the culture and tradition of India, Tharoor’s the other great novel Riot tells about how the people have done away with their great culture and tradition and are on the roads of bloodshed and violence.

Tharoor has always argued that Indian culture is one of the oldest cultures in the history of mankind. He says “our poorest men and women feel the throb of culture on their pulse, for they tell stories to their children under the starlet skies-stories of their land its heroes, stories of the earth and its mysteries, stories that have gone into making them what they are”. The culture and the people of this country go hand in hand. The ‘culture’ in India is not taught it is in the blood. Since thousands of years to present day India the psyche of an Indian is same. Indians, according to Tharoor have always been the living characters of the great epic ‘Mahabharata’, only the name have changed. Tharoor himself acts as ved Vyasa in his The Great Indian Novel.

The culture of India is the identity of India. Tharoor opines that mere survival by eating does not make mankind civilized nor does materialistic development makes man cultured. This is why he says
“we are all familiar with the notion that ‘man does not live by bread alone’. In India, I would argue that music, dance, art and the telling of stories are indispensable to our ability to cope with the human conditions”. Tharoor rightly point that people of India excelled in the art of music, dance and story telling. Only because of these arts the legends of Krishna and Rama are alive today. No child in India grows without knowing the tales of Lord Krishna or Lord Rama. The stories of these legends are told to the children of India even before they are admitted in the school.

Though the culture of India is so old and so rich yet what bothers Tharoor is the present day situation, especially the India after British rule and its Independence. Things have changed fast after Indian Independence and Tharoor thinks they have not changed for good. Tharoor is always haunted by the question of its integrity and unitedness.

There has been a sea change in the approach of the people of India. No body is ready to believe the other, nobody likes another. Sunderland has tried to explain saying “Indian people, who are not barbarians or “half civilized” as many seem to suppose, but people
who represent an ancient and high civilization, who as a nation have had a long and proud past, but who more than a century and a half ago were conquered by force of arms and by commercial and diplomatic duplicity, and have been held in subjection ever since by a foreign power?" Even Tharoor also says that things took a turn only after the British came to India. People who started uniting for the freedom struggle started quarreling after Independence.

The British came to India because "India was one of the richest countries of the world; indeed, it was her great riches that attracted the British to her shores. The source of her wealth was largely her splendid manufactures. Her cotton goods, silk goods, shawls, musters of Dacca, brocades of Ahmedabad, rugs, pottery of Sindh, jewelry, metal works, and lapidary work, were famed not only all over Asia, but in all the leading markets of North Africa and Europe". Along with these goods and wealth the British had the other advantage also and that was the people of this land were not united, as the Britishers and neither they were shrewd. This was the greatest advantage for the Britishers to loot and rule India for more than two hundred years. The ruling of British for more than two hundred years had brought enormous change in India.
Tharoor even acknowledges that the British rule in India had many advantages also. He says that it was only because of British rule the people of India started thinking about themselves as a nation. Until then they never united and lived in small clans and kingdoms. Tharoor emphasizes even about the social justice that was brought by the British. The weaker section of the society which was neglected by the upper caste Hindus for thousands of years got an opportunity to witness freedom and equality in the society.

Tharoor says, even the educational system was also changed by the British. All the people got an opportunity to learn. But at the same time Tharoor makes an analysis that England was not interested in producing scholars out of Indians instead they just wanted literate people to carry out their orders.

With all these advantages of British rule in India, India was always at the receiving end. The British not only exploited the wealth of this country but they also divided the land and people of this country. This had a negative impact on the psyche of Indians.
This brought a social and cultural change in the identity of India.

“India”, Winston Churchill once barked, “is merely a geographical expression. It is no more a single country than the equator”.17

Adding to this V.S. Naipaul in his India as A wounded civilization says that “India was a third world country, without a sense of history, without a social memory”.18 But after pondering through the works of Tharoor which give a complete glimpse of past and present history of India, it can be concluded that Churchill and Naipaul are the ‘outsiders’ who have not tried to understand or know India in depth. Both of them seem to be like any other European writer who enjoys portraying India as he wants rather than presenting as it is.

Quoting Subramanian Chitra, an Indian, would be more apt here. She says “explaining India to an outsider is a veritable nightmare. Its Europe times four, not just in terms of people, but also political parties and problems. The difference between North and South India is so much, if not more, than that between Sweden and Portugal, two tips of Europe”.19 Here Chitra is trying to convey how
difficult it is for an outsider to understand India. The diversity is so enormous that it is almost impossible for an outsider to know India. The following sentence by Savitri, a character in Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope* will further clarify how difficult it is to understand India. “Savitri’s a northerner, confesses that the northerners are new to civilization, and hence are not as classical in their taste as the southerners”.

Tharoor also does not agree to what Churchill and Naipaul comment on India. In all his works he tries to re-examine the history, culture and heritage of this country. Rao A.S confirms “Shashi Tharoor intends to re-examine the received wisdom of all ages accumulated on the fertile soil of India. He expressed his readiness to question the certitudes, to acknowledge the imperfections and face them, true to her best traditions. In his message he wishes to reassert dharma defined not just of values and standards: These values and standards according to him are derived from myth and tradition. Some of them are drawn from our history and tradition. He acknowledges the ‘multiplicity of truth’ that runs to give shape and substance to the very idea of India as a nation. He admits that his fiction is infused, in this sense, with the greatness of India, a greatness that has emerged
from the fusion of its myth the aspirations of its history". It is not only in The Great Indian Novel but in almost all his works he has re-examined the image of India. His works like India from Midnight to the Millennium not only examines social image but also all other aspects needed for the development of India. He talks about the importance of economic development to strengthen the country. In Riot he tries to convey the people of India that India is not for any one community but every community living here is the equal owner of this country. He strongly advocates for secularism or pluralistic approach. Even in his 'Show Business' he exposes how the politicians of this country are corrupt and selfish.

Tharoor in his re-examination of the image of India does not hesitate to show the mirror to the Indians. He does not talk only about the good things but also about negative aspects, which are coming in the way of development of India. Anita Parihar says "Show Business" treats show business at two levels – the political and the reel level. Contradictory worlds are presented through the two levels. At the political level, a chaotic, complex democracy emerges and at the reel level a highly fantastic, exaggerated India emerges". In Show Business, Tharoor has no hesitation in exposing the hypocrisy of
Indian cinema. He says Indian cinemas have no touch of reality. In cinemas a rich girl most of the times elopes with a poor boy or a girl of one community marries a boy of some other community and they live happily. But in reality Tharoor says, it is almost impossible. Instead when these things happen they lead to violence and huge damage is done to both the communities. *Show Business* does not expose India only at political level but at many angles like social and cultural levels also. He talks about the falsities in the world of cinema, how people fall prey to camouflaged seduction. The niceties on the reel are most of the time horrifying realities. Tharoor is harsh when he says that Indian cinema is full of hypocrisy but it seems to be reality when he symbolically explains about Abha’s breasts, an important character in *Show Business* who represents a typical Indian film star. Tharoor says, “I can’t believe what I have just seen: breasts so shriveled and empty they are like pockets of desiccated skin, their tips drooping in dry dismay. Abha’s bosom is that of ninety-year-old. The most famous bust in India is a pair of falsies”. Tharoor thinks that the themes of Indian cinema are also full of falsies. The hero in the film fights for the rights and justice, which he so easily gets. But in reality they have since ages remained a distant dream.
Tharoor highlights about other social aspects of India in his works like illiteracy and poverty. About literacy he says that throughout India the literacy rates vary very much. In his *Kerala: God’s own country* he says that his native state Kerala has made much progress in literacy as compared to other states of India. He is especially very excited about the literacy rate achieved by the women. To quote “The mere fact that every Kerala girl or woman above the age of six can read and write is little short of a miracle, in a country where more women are illiterate than not, and where a state like Bihar enter the twenty first century with only 27 per cent of its women able to decipher an alphabet. A girl born in Kerala can expect to live twenty years longer than one born in Uttar Pradesh, and she can expect to make the important decisions in her life, to attend college, choose a profession, do what others might consider men’s work”.

This statistics of Tharoor does not only talk about the varied education in the country but also tells about how things differ from one place to another here in India. He throws light on how the woman of Kerala excels from the woman of Uttar Pradesh or any other place. In Kerala the woman can take any task as a challenge where as in other parts of the country they are Orthodox. Tharoor is right in assessment about keralites because they are the people who are ready to go anywhere to
earn their bread and butter. Tharoor's family itself is an example for it as his father had gone to England to make his living. But with the passing of time, the people from other parts of the country have also opened their wings and are ready to fly anywhere.

Tharoor who is so proud of India has a special affection to his native state Kerala, because he says, "In spite of being India's most advanced society, Kerala has retained its native charms". 

This statement of Tharoor draws special attentions in describing the thinking of individual Indian. Tharoor who always advocates about 'One nation', in his sub-conscious state of mind is engulfed in the same thinking as any other Indian thinks. The problem with the Indians is that, even though they are all Indians from every aspect of life they have not started thinking like that. Every one in India identifies himself only with his own native place, language, religion and culture. None of them identifies only as an Indian.

Tharoor, in Riot, explains that region, religion, language and caste divide Indians and not unite them. In saying so he is right and he himself is an example of this analysis, because its not only Kerala
which is advanced or beautiful, there are many other states which are more advanced than Kerala and for beauty who can ignore the charms of Kashmir?

Tharoor next discusses a major problem i.e. about the poverty in India, which has become an evil. In his *India from Midnight to the Millennium* he explains that there are various reasons for poverty like — social inequality, illiteracy etc. Half of the population of this country is uneducated and Tharoor feels this is one of the major causes of poverty. Thousands of people in India live below poverty line but Nissim Ezekiel feels “It seems that in India if you are not a peasant or an Industrial worker, if you do not live on the pavements or in a hutment colonies, then obviously you are rich”. Iyer Pico in his Video Night in Kathmandu contradicts to what Nissim Ezekiel says as he states “The streets of India are swollen with an embarrassment of riches, a richness of embarrassments. And it is on the streets that millions live, make love, defecate and die”. Both Nissim Ezekiel and Iyer Pico seem to be right but the assessment of Iyer Pico can be concluded as more apt because Nehru also experienced the same feelings about his own Indian brothers. Tharoor in *NEHRU the invention of India* says Nehru “Looking at them and
their misery and overflowing gratitude, I was filled with shame and sorrow, shame at my own easy going and comfortable life and our petty politics of the city which ignored this vast multitude of semi-naked sons and daughters of India, sorrow at the degradation and overwhelming poverty of India".  

Tharoor is of the opinion that the India Nehru saw fifty years back has not changed much and the situation is still equally grave. The reason for this poverty even today is same. Petty politics and self-centered attitude of the politicians and criminalization of politics are coming in the way of the development of poor people.

There are some other reasons also which do not help the common man of India to come out of the web called poverty. Brahma Dutta Sharma is of the opinion that Indians “need money not for any productive use but for consumptive use, like celebrating marriages of their daughters”. Marriages are not the only occasions when money is spent like water in India. Every religion, every community, every individual finds hundreds of occasions to spend money. As many of them are poor people they go to money lenders to borrow loans. The
money lenders charge heavy rate of interests from which these poor people never come out.

To put in the words of Karnani Chetan "the main fact about India is that many people do not get enough to eat". Yet for them their false prestige in spending money for marriages and festivals is more important.

The other vital aspects that bother Tharoor are politics and communal violence, which are tarnishing the image of India. Tharoor's main concern is the communal issues, which are acting as devils hands in Indian society and politics. Riot his much acclaimed novel is the result of such concerns, which focuses on the people of India, their ideology, culture, and love and hate relationships. Tharoor has succeeded in taking a small incident like killing of Priscillia Hart, a character in the novel, in a riot. With this incident as the central point he has conveyed how a traditional Indian society is changing. He has tried to present a picture of the group of people who are competing for the supremacy in the country. This group is the Hindutwa Brigand, which is grieved of the past history of India and has taken oath to set right the things, which were wronged centuries
back. This fundamentalism, feel Tharoor, is ruining Indian secular fabrication.

To resolve this problem and to retain Indian secularism he suggests “we have to evolve our even identities by preserving what we can of our heritage and merging it with those of the others around us”.

These around us are none other than Muslims, and these Muslims are not new to India as Britishers. They came to India thousands of years ago and settled here. Now they have become inseparable part of India’s culture and identity.

Tharoor in his Kerala God’s own country explains “Islam came to Kerala not by the sword, as it was to do elsewhere in India, but through traders, travelers and missionaries, who brought its message of equality and brotherhood to the coastal people. Not only was the new faith peacefully embraced, but it found encouragement in attitudes and episodes without parallel elsewhere in the non-Islamic world: in one example, the all powerful zamorin of Calicut asked each fisherman’s family in his domain to bring up one son as a Muslim, for service in his Muslim run navy commanded by sailors of Arab descent, the Kunjali Marai cam”.

Tharoor makes it clear that
though the Muslims entered India through North with swords they did not use it to spread in the other regions of the country. They peacefully spread their wings. By the time they reached South India, especially Kerala they had their ‘image’ changed. They had become peaceful and this impressed the people of Kerala who willingly accepted and adapted to this religion. Hence, this country has not only mixed but ‘multiple cultures’.

India which is known for its ‘multiple culture’ the contemporary India has become volatile to communalism and it’s other aspects. The result is that there are communal tensions all over India and Tharoor thinks it is all because of “political manipulation of communal identities”.33 Tharoor in his book India from Midnight to the Millennium blames these politicians of India who have started the cheap method of communal identities. The politicians are making these ‘communal identities’ as their vote banks.

Tharoor says that if India has to tackle other socio-economic problems of its country, then the only solution left is accommodating every one. He explains, “The central challenge of India as we enter the twenty first century is the challenge of accommodating the
aspirations of different groups in the national dreams". According to Tharoor there is no other way to come out. Muslims cannot be ignored. Even Professor Sarwar, a character in Riot, argues that Muslims are as Indians as any Hindu. They cannot be denied of the air, they breath and water they drink of this country.

Ram Charan Gupta, a character in the novel Riot, strongly argues that he and his group are all set to right the wrong done to Hindus some four hundred years back. They believe that Babar, a Mughal emperor of sixteenth century had destroyed Ram temple in Ayodhya and had built Babri Masjid there.

What Tharoor argues and pin-points is that even if it is true of what Babar had done, some four hundred years back, it is not the time to avenge it. Tharoor's point of argument is that today's India neither needs Masjids nor Temples. There are many burning problems, which need urgent attention by the politicians of India.

Tharoor in his India from Midnight to the Millennium gives an account of how the destruction of Babri Masjid led to the series of Bomb blasts in Bombay stock exchange. In both the incidents huge economic loses were incurred and innocent lives were lost.
Tharoor specifies that it is only in the late Nineteen hundred eighties, these communal tensions reached to the peak point. The divide between Hindus and Muslims is constantly increasing. Shyamala Narayan rightly says that “Hindu – Muslim riots can start if a Hindu man is seen talking privately to a young Muslim girl”. Even more trivial incident than the one mentioned by Shyamala Narayan also leads to sporadic riots.

Tharoor, who always feels proud of the biggest democracy on the earth, worries about such politicians, communal tensions and riots. He often talks of pluralistic approach to be accepted by the Indians. He is worried that the country which was once divided by the British will be again divided by the politicians. He says that in this country where every one is a ‘minority’ should join the hands together to build a nation and nationhood. Vinita Bhatnagar also expresses that “India is not truly free until a real democracy comes into existence here, a democracy in which a class-divided, exploitative society governed by ruling class ideology is overthrown, and the politics begins to represent the interests of the vast majority instead of an elitist minority”.

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If *The Great Indian Novel* tells about political history of India, *Riot* talks about cultural and communal harmony and tensions in India. *Show Business* reveals about the hypocrisy prevailing in the society. It also tells about how Indian cinemas are like the dreams of every poor man in India who sees it with his eyes wide open.

To conclude, Tharoor finds India a vast country with one of the oldest civilizations on the earth. The major religion practiced here is ‘Hinduism’ which has a rich cultural heritage. At the same time almost all the religions of the earth have traveled here and settled down. Hinduism has given space to every other religion and has even adopted many of the qualities from various religions, without loosing its original aura. India has always remained as rightly called by Tharoor, is a myth, a song and a mystery which has baffled westerners. Tharoor even states that “Hinduism has always acknowledged the existence of opposites (and reconciled them): pain and pleasure, success and failure, creation and destruction, life and death, are all manifestations of the duality inherent in human existence. These pairings are not contradictory but complementary; they are aspects of the same overarching reality”.

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After a thorough discussion in his writings he finds in India everyone is a minority. So according to Tharoor the only way to live as a single nation is to accept the 'pluralism' which exists in India. As he says “My India, like Salman Rushdie’s, has room enough for everyone”38 and has the desire of seeing India as a nation where all the people of all communities, caste, class and creed live harmoniously. He does not want this oldest civilization and the biggest democracy to burn in the fire of cheap politics and communalism.
REFERENCES


7. Ibid. P.258.


16. Ibid. P.12


32. Ibid. P.24.


