As a literary genre, parody is nothing but the concretization of man’s innate urge to rebel against authority. It has therefore a plebian bias, gravitating upwards from the lower strata of society, unlike the direct word disseminating downwards. It is, generally speaking, a comparatively ‘cruder’ variety of covert literary revolt against the traditionally accepted, canonical, straightforward set of genres of widely differing socio-historic, cultural milieux. But it has been generally accepted that, in its essentials, it is nothing but subversive mimicry of an original, usually more well-known work. According to Fowler, the term itself is derived from the Greek ‘parodia’, “a beside or against song” (559), concentrating on the style or thought of the original. To trace its roots we must necessarily direct our enquiry back to ancient Greece.

It was a common practice among the Greeks to present tragedy and parody in immediate juxtaposition. Parody, as mentioned, comes from the ‘parodia’ of Attic drama, a scene
which marks the entry of the chorus. The satyr plays, such as the *Cyclops* of Euripides and *The Searching Satyrs* of Sophocles, which immediately followed the tragedies, were performed by the same actors wearing odd costumes. Aristophanes is generally regarded as the first true parodist with such works as *The Frogs*, *The Birds*, and *The Acharnians* to his credit.

The invention of parody is sometimes ascribed to Hipponax of Ephesus (fl. 540 B.C.), the mordant, annihilative capacity of whose bitter verses may be surmised from an apocryphal story, related by Pliny, of the sculptor Bupalus and his brother Athenis who hanged themselves after being brutally parodied by the poet (Howatson 410). Aristotle, conversely, credits its invention to Hegemon of Thrace (877), who may have been the first ever winner of a contest for parodies. However, the most important parodists in still extant Greek literature are Aristophanes, Plato, and Lucian. Of these, the first parodies mainly the tragic style of Euripides. Plato is subtle as well as ambitious in his *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. Lucian parodies not ordinary mortals, but the Olympian gods themselves.

To Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975) should go the credit for establishing parody at the centre-stage rather than at its accustomed peripheral position in literature. Discussing the prehistory of novelistic discourse, he posits that laughter
acted as one of the two most important factors leading to the development, and eventual establishment, of the novel in Europe, the other being polyglossia (50). He ascribes to parody ancient roots that almost takes us back to the time of the Homeric epics. In ancient Greece, parody served as the Newtonian counter-force to almost every well-entrenched straight-forward genre - the satyr-play, or the so-called ‘fourth drama’, which followed the tragic trilogy being a classic paradigm. The idealized handling of the myth in the preceding trilogy was shown in a totally different parodic light in the satyr-play. All the great tragedians of antiquity such as Sophocles, Euripides, and Aeschylus were writers of satyr-plays as well. The figure of ‘comic Odysseus’ parodying the great epic-tragic hero and the figure of ‘comic Hercules’ were very popular in Greece, the latter’s popularity even extending to later-day Rome, and even in Byzantium. Bakhtin points out that the Greeks did not consider such parodic-travestying of their national heroes and myths as blasphemy or profanation of any sort. In fact, the authorship of the parody War between the Mice and the Frogs was attributed to Homer himself. Bakhtin views every straight-forward genre as being essentially one-sided, needing parody to illuminate the other side.

In Rome, the role of the satyr-plays were performed by the Atellan literary farces initially, to be replaced by mimes
at a later stage, both travestying the preceding tragedy. Bakhtin asserts that the parodic spirit pervaded even the graphic arts of the Romans. He adduces the case of the 'consular diptychs', in which comic scenes are depicted on the left and the tragic ones on the right. Bakhtin says in this connection:

... there never was a single strictly straightforward genre, no single type of direct discourse - artistic, rhetorical, philosophical, religious, ordinary everyday - that did not have its own parodying and travestying double, its own comic ironic contre-partie. What is more, these parodic doubles and laughing reflections of the direct word were, in some cases, just as sanctioned by tradition and just as canonized as their elevated models (53).

The ancient Greeks parodied not the heroes of the Trojan War but their tragic epic heroization. "It was not, after all, the heroes who were parodied, nor the Trojan War and its participants; what was parodied was only its epic heroization; not Hercules and his exploits but their tragic heroization" (55). Thus, to Aeschylus is attributed the fragmentary satyr-play The Bone-Gatherers in which the heroes of the Trojan War themselves are parodied. The travestied version of Odysseus presents him as being mentally deranged in order to avoid taking part in the war (54).
In ancient Rome, and particularly in Southern Italy, there flourished a wide variety of parodic travestying forms which were very popular among ordinary people. Affirms Bakhtin:

The literary and artistic consciousness of the Romans could not imagine a serious form without its comic equivalent. The serious straightforward form was perceived as only a fragment, only half of a whole; the fullness of the whole was achieved only upon adding the comic contre-partie of this form. Everything serious had to have, and indeed did have, its comic double (58).

A bulk of these parodic travestying forms were passed on to the Middle Ages via oral tradition.

Bakhtin avers that it is a genre or its style that is parodied. It follows therefore that a parody of an epic cannot belong to the genre of epic. Speaking about the manner in which parodic travestying forms of antiquity prepared the path for the evolution of the novel, he asserts that these forms liberated the object from the power of language in which it had become entangled as if in a net; they destroyed the homogenizing power of myth over language; they freed consciousness from the power of the direct word, destroyed the thick walls that had imprisoned consciousness within its own discourse, within its own language. A distance arose between language and reality that was to prove an
indispensable condition for authentically realistic forms of discourse (60).

Just as the Greek parodic tradition was passed on to Rome, so the parodic travestying spirit drifted to the Middle Ages from Rome. The most well-known among such parodic works was The Cyprian Feasts in which all the important sacred personages in the Bible and Gospel from Adam to Christ eat and drink merrily in a grand feast. Although scholarly opinion is divided about the purpose of the play, with some arguing for a mnemonic intention and others calling it a "straight-forward blasphemous parody," Bakhtin seems to adhere to the latter group calling it "sacred parody" (71).

However, there seemed to have existed some sort of a parodic license even in those "dark" Middle Ages, and even the Church authorities seemed to have, paradoxically, encouraged such works; may be because ritual laughter was in great currency at that time. Speaking about the role of parody in the Middle Ages, Bakhtin comments that it provided the path for a "new literary and linguistic consciousness, as well as for the great Renaissance novel". In the Middle Ages, any holiday or festival was occasion for parodying. In this connection Bakhtin makes the observation that "There was no genre, no text, no prayer, no saying that did not receive its
parodic equivalent" (74). Finally, with the appearance of the Renaissance novel of Rabelais and Cervantes, the novel as a new and challenging literary form had arrived. In Don Quixote, Cervantes parodied both the genre of Romance with its knightly chivalry and the naïve reader of that genre who tended to identify with or even idealize the text before him.

Coming to English literature, if the Tale of Sir Thopas is essentially parodic in form and content, Chaucer may arguably be called the father of parody in English as well. In the Tale of Sir Thopas, he parodies the romances of knight-errantry by contemporary poets. In the "Prologue" to the Tale of Sir Thopas, the author can be seen not only as a parodist but also as a self-parodist.

According to Michael D. Bristol, the traditional scenarios, masks and dramatis personae of Carnival and other popular festive forms are nothing but concretizations of unauthorized political views and suggestions with little risk of punishment. As the artefacts of carnival are made of perishable material, there is hardly any trace of permanence. In fact, for the sake of the personal safety of those concerned, it is designed to be ephemeral. However, Nashe’s Lenten Stuffe (1599) and Taylor’s Jacke-a-Lente (1630) preserve for posterity the spirit of parody inherent in Carnivals. Unfortunately, these texts were completely sidelined by the gargantuan canonical works of the period,
which afforded little space for these texts of challenge. Consequently, even as they dealt with the so-called ‘popular stuff’, they were never included in the ‘popular literature’ of the time. Says Bristol:

These texts of Carnival situate themselves exactly at the frontier between elite and popular culture, the zone where reciprocal pressure, combination, and the diversity of speech types and discursive genres is greatest; and it is precisely in these mongrel or heteroglot texts that the repressed or excluded meanings of popular culture become most intelligible (58).

Lenten Stuffe as a travesty of More’s Utopia, parodies Raphael Hythloday’s portraiture of a journey to the ideal ‘Nowhere Land’. Nashe’s antipodean paradigm distorts More’s vision of the ideal with disjointed symbols and images of the commonplace. Nashe depicts the fishing town of Yarmouth and the figure of the Red Herring in the true spirit of parody. Herring, the humblest of all fishes and the common man’s chief source of protein the world over, is glorified out of proportion. Says Bristol:

The ‘praise of the Red Herring’ is Utopia carnivalized. The saturnalian possibilities of material abundance created by collective labor are reunited with the anarchic and prolifically
creative language of everyday life. Everything is treated as laughing matter, even the central utopian hope itself. The utopian reality is reached by a journey, but that reality is not represented as a distant and exotic social horizon. The golden age was not long ago, but right now. Nashe finds Utopia at Yarmouth; he finds the economic, material and symbolic instrument of utopian transformation in the Red Herring” (102).

In Taylor’s parodic text, Jack-a-Lent is a fugitive servant from Utopia on a visit to England. More’s traditionalistic credo, as revealed in the manorial set-up practised in Utopia, is exposed as hollow and suffocating. Instead, we come across the humorous situation of Jack-a-Lent’s experience of freedom in the city of London (Bristol 94).

The eighteenth century was predominantly an age of satire in England. It proffered the world such significant mock epics like Pope’s Dunciad and Rape of the Lock; Gay’s Beggar’s Opera, a travesty of the grand operatic style; Swift’s Battle of the Books, and A Tale of a Tub; his Gulliver’s Travels and Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe, both imitating the well-entrenched genre of that period – traveller’s tales.

With the exception of Joyce’s Ulysses, which is a modernist parody of the Homeric epic, and Sterne’s Tristam
Shandy, which is metafictional, it would seem that the English were all too concerned with the direct straight-forward word to evince much of an inclination for parody. The atmosphere of polyglossia, so vital for parodic travestying forms to flourish, did not exist in England. Instead, there prevailed the uncongenial monoglotic conditions which prevented the parodic spirit from thriving. English had long established itself as a major world language, and there did not exist any challenging heteroglossic stratification of the tongue within the country. So the challenge to the direct word had to come from without. It had to emerge from the periphery, the so-called 'commonwealth' or the freshly renomenclatured 'post-colonial' literatures. Such conditions of polyglossia existed in Canada which produced Timothey Findley's Not Wanted on the Voyage and in India in Indian English fiction (to name only two instances), Tharoor's Great Indian Novel. Findley's Not Wanted on the Voyage is a travesty of the biblical flood. Tharoor's work is a parody of the Mahabharata set in modern times, that is, the era of India's freedom struggle. Needless to say, Gandhi, Nehru, and a host of other national figures appear in the novel, partially hidden behind the semi-transparent veil of post-colonial fiction.

Novelisation is a recent phenomenon as far as India is concerned, going backwards not more than a century and a half. There may be people who argue that Bana's Kadambari and
Subandhu's *Vasavadatta* are essentially novels, albeit ancient, "but the description would not really fit..." says Iyengar (314). But even if they may be categorized thus, they are fundamentally islands isolated in the extended history of Indian literary tradition, for long dominated by the highly disciplined and sober epic genre. Max Muller was of the view that the Brahmans used the direct genres to bolster their own superior position in the class hierarchy of the ancient times. Muller even argues that they rewrote the sacred Sanskrit texts in such a way as to suit their own interests (Bisgaard x). Naturally, in that age of limited opportunities, when literacy was the privilege of a chosen few, there could not be, realistically, any opposition to the direct word.

When, under the influence of the British rule and the dissemination of the English language, India took to writing in that tongue, they tried to outEnglish even the English themselves in the matter of their reverence for the straightforward genres. Henry Derozio (1809-1831), one of the earliest Indian English poets, took after the Romantic poets. Tagore evoked the direct word in his transcendental, Nobel-prize-winning poetic collection *Geetanjali* (1912). He turned for inspiration to the Indian dramatic tradition for his plays such as *Sanyasi*. Aurobindo used the story of Satyavan and Savitri of the *Mahabharata* for his massive epic poem *Savitri*. Turning to fiction, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's*
*Wife* (1864) was the first ever Indian novel to be published in English (Iyengar 315). The so-called big three of Indian English fiction – R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao – were essentially serious no-nonsense writers. Of these, only Narayan attempted laughter in his subtle style. Asphyxiated as Indian English literature as a whole was in this straightish atmosphere of 'serious' narration, only one writer strove to break the walls and scoff at the direct word: G.V. Desani in his remarkable novel, *All About H. Hatterr* (1948). As Naik puts it:

The verbal pyrotechnics in the novel include parody of numerous types of style including Babu English, Oriental flowery style, cockney speech, commercial English, medical, legal and nautical terminology; outrageous puns and word-play involving half a dozen languages; twisted translations, deliberate Malapropisms; mixed metaphors, folksy parallels, comic analogies, funny proper names, mis-applied allusions and jokes of all kinds (228).

Commenting on the nature of art in India, Ruskin has made a very curious observation:

...it [Indian art] never represents a natural fact. It either forms its compositions out of meaningless fragments of colour and flowings of line; or, if it represents any living creature, it represents that
creature under some distorted and monstrous form. To all the facts and forms of nature it wilfully and resolutely opposes itself: it will not draw a man, but an eight-armed monster: it will not draw a flower but only a spiral or a zig-zag (Sencourt 439).

Ruskin had struck at the heart of the matter, so to speak – a vital truth about the nature of the Indian artistic psyche, which may, in extension, be applied to the Indian literary consciousness. The Indian temperament, which revealed itself through her rich and diverse art forms, was ideally suited for fantasy and for subversive parodic travestying forms in literature. Moreover, a maddening Babel-like polyglossia existed in this country for parodic travestying forms to flourish.

But the baffling paradox is that, not withstanding the favourable socio-cultural milieux present for subversive genres here, we do not come across parodic-travestying forms in India as often as should have been the case which may have led such an experienced critic as P. Lal to conclude that "irony was conspicuous by its absence or its minimal presence in Indian literature" until he came across Tharoor’s The Great Indian Novel (11). However, parodic elements enliven the Tamasha, the folk theatre form of Maharashtra, in which a Tamasha woman personifies the milkmaid of the Krishna legend.
Lord Krishna is impersonated by none other than the Buffoon himself, and the milkmaid and the Buffoon exchange lewd lines, striking a bold irreverent tone all the time (Gargi 78). It is worthwhile to note that the social stature of the Buffoon was so low that Ambedkar himself forbade the Dalits from playing such roles in the Tamasha (Zelliot 172).

Kudiyattam, the ancient theatre form of Kerala, in which the local language Malayalam is uttered only by the clown, 'vidusaka', has some vitriolic satire aimed at the upper caste Hindus. The 'vidusaka', who is himself a Brahman, speaks what is considered a pure form of Malayalam: but the content and spirit of the language is essentially demolitionistic. The 'vidusaka' ridicules the Brahmans vis-à-vis the 'purusarthas'. Pretending to recount his own experiences, the 'vidusaka' embarks upon a stinging denunciation of the moral degeneracy of the Brahmans. He proceeds to elucidate that the 'dharma' of the Brahman is nothing but gluttony, his 'artha' a cringing servility to the ruler, philandering his 'kama', and knavery and deception his 'moksha' (Sarva Vigyana Kosam 740; Viswa Vigyana Kosam 433). Kapila Vatsyayan terms this aspect of Kudiyattam as the "parody of the four Purusarthas" (26).

However, parody seems to be enjoying great vogue in India at present. In South India, particularly in Kerala for instance, there are professional mimicry groups which are very popular and perform at various temple and church festivals,
and even at college get-togethers. Several well-known Malayalam film actors like Jayaram, Sidhique, Kala Bhavan Mani, Harisri Asokan, Dilip and Sainudhin have emerged from the ranks of these ubiquitous 'mimics groups', themselves mimicking and parodying the styles of various renowned personalities, politicians, film stars, popular music composers and so on. Another prominent parodist, V.D.Rajappan, is a household name here, and has many famous parodic renditions of popular film songs to his credit. It may be added that parody, through the institution of various mimicry groups, has somewhat attained the status of a folk art, albeit subversive, in South India, and especially in Kerala. Nadir Shah, a well-known parodist, has even published a hit-cassette titled Titanenic, a parody of the Hollywood blockbuster, James Cameron's Titanic. What is more, a parody of a parody or a yet unprecedented meta-parody has also emerged in Kerala in recent times with the publication of Lusanenic, apparently a subversion of Titanenic. The present trend in Kerala, the most literate state in India, of utilizing parodying techniques for electioneering purposes and to drive home political messages is very significant when viewed from a post-colonial perspective. In this backdrop, it is worth noting that Shashi Tharoor, the author of The Great Indian Novel, itself a parody of the Mahabharata, has his roots in Kerala, even though he may be working and writing abroad. The Great Indian Novel is
also important as far as Indian English fiction is concerned, as it is perhaps, if we exclude *The Satanic Verses*, the first ever full length parody to come out of the Indian subcontinent.

Yet it was perhaps Salman Rushdie who first realized the literary possibilities of parody in Indian English fiction. In an interview to Michael T. Kaufman, he responded with an amazing insight:

It seemed to me that if you had to choose a form for that part of the world, the form you would choose would be the comic epic. It seemed like the obvious, the most natural form. And it seemed amazing to me that when you looked at the literature that had been produced about India, it seemed dated and delicate, and I wondered why these dainty, delicate books were being written about this massive, elephantine place? It was as if you’d seen an area of cultivable land and the richest soil in it had never been cultivated. You know that everybody is trying to grow crops in the stony ground around the edges and this wonderful prime soil is just left there (Kaufman 22).
II

The strategy of 'refunctioning' or re-use of older texts is being increasingly viewed as an essentially postmodern, post-colonial practice to come to grips with the new realities of existence and their representation in art and literature. The term 'to refunction' is in fact a translation from German 'Umfunktionierung,' used by Brecht (Rose 36). Alfred Liede stresses the imitative aspects of parody equating success in the parodying art to the attainment of maximum similarity to the target text. However, Rose questions Liede's stand regarding the idea of imitation:

...while imitation may be used as a technique in the parody it is the use of incongruity which distinguishes the parody from other forms of quotation and literary imitation, and shows its function to be more than imitation alone (22).

Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* when considered as a parody of the epic *Mahabharata* arouses reader interest vis-à-vis its relationship with the target text; that is, the extent to which Tharoor has succeeded in refunctioning the traditional work in its new distorted form, and also the manner in which the ancient text has been transformed and situated in the modern post-Independent Indian context. It is
important to note that Tharoor has by and large followed the English translations of the *Mahabharata* of P. Lal and Rajagopalachari as the question of the appropriate target text can become quite a perplexing issue with discriminating readers. Tharoor's Ved Vyasa or V.V. is a "cantankerous, old man," a discarded politician who is not even fit for a party-ticket anymore, or a "ceremonial governship." His "old friend" is none other than Brahm who has contacts with the Apsara Agency who earlier arranged a female amanuensis for the difficult eighty-eight year old V.V. He is finally persuaded to arrange Ganapathi, a South Indian, as his new amanuensis. Our present-day Ved Vyasa even boasts of using "modern technology" a small Japanese tape-recorder to put his voice into whenever Ganapathi took a break.

The salient feature of parody is its embedding of dual texts within a single work; that is, the specific parodic text and the target text. However, Tharoor's *GIN* (as it will henceforth be referred to) is exceptional in this regard as within it we find embedded not just two but at least four texts. The first two texts are identified as the epic and its parodization. The third is the history of twentieth century India featuring Nehru, Gandhi, et al; and the fourth works as the parody of twentieth century Indian history itself. Thus in Tharoor's *GIN* we have a refufunctioning of a certain period in Indian history itself. In this case also, locating the target
text becomes slightly problematic. But it is certain that Tharoor’s target text is the wide area of so-called official or ruling class historiography, the favourite punching-bag of several post-colonial writers, Rushdie for instance. Tharoor also seems to be at odds with the kind of popular historicization exercises conducted by such writers as Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre who, for all their implied “objectivity” and “neutrality”, yet manage to write with an imperialistic slant, as this thesis will demonstrate in due course. Tharoor seems to view history as a text which needs the medicinal curing touch of the parodying art to restore reality to its fullness, to correct the misrepresentations of the direct word, the official version, in the way so many other writers like Rushdie had done before him. If Tharoor’s Ved Vyas is an octogenarian politician of post-Independent India, his Bhishma is a wilful reminder of none other than Mahatma Gandhi himself.

Tharoor’s choice of an age-old, popular epic like the Mahabharata for his target text must have arisen from accepted wisdom and conventional practice as, according to Rose:

...history proves that only parodies of well-known and also powerfully poetic works survive. The parody must also, however, have something new to say about these works for it to survive independently (30).
In medieval literature, biblical parody was not only widespread but also acceptable, as pointed out by Paul Lehmann (Rose 31). The Mahabharata, though a secular work, occupies a near similar position in India as it is held in veneration by most Hindus, especially as it includes the Bhagavad Gita.

Rose provides a valuable differentiation between parody and satire, in that while parody makes the target a part of its text, satire does not (34). Hutcheon, on the other hand, while trying to make a similar differentiation between parody and satire, seems to be less clear. Even as she stresses that the best works about parody confuse it with satire which she says is different from parody in both its moral and social focus and "ameliorative intention"; in the same breath she says that parody does have ideological and social implications (16). Rose also gives her own definition of literary parody "as the critical refunctioning of preformed literary material with comic effect..." (35). Hutcheon considers parody as "one of the major modes of formal and thematic construction of texts" in the twentieth century. In the present century parody is confined not merely to literature, but it is to be found in other art forms as well. It even acquires the form of an "inter-art discourse." Magritte's The Treason of Images or This is not a Pipe is considered as a parody of the medieval and baroque emblem form (Hutcheon 2).
Hutcheon challenges the traditional standard dictionary definition of parody as ridiculing imitation. Citing Joyce’s *Ulysses* as an example of twentieth century parody, she argues that while the traditional text is the formally backgrounded or parodied text here, it is not one to be mocked or ridiculed; if anything, it is to be seen, as in the mock epic, as an ideal or at least as a norm from which the modern departs (5).

She therefore concludes that parody is an imitative form "characterized by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text." She also formulates parody as "repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity" (6). Tharoor’s *GIN* reinforces Hutcheon’s argument as the author in his introductory note about the title emphasizes the significance of the *Mahabharata* as his "primary source of inspiration." It is very clear that the author’s intention is not to ridicule the target text; it is in fact the point from which he departs.

Hutcheon asserts that even non-literary discourse may be parodied. *Tom Jones* and *Tristam Shandy*, for instance, subverts the scholarly practice of annotation and footnotes. "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote" undermines the genre of the biblio-bio- critical note on a writer. Woody Allen’s *Zelig* parodies the television documentary and movie newsreel (18).
Hutcheon considers Rose’s emphasis on incongruity, discrepancy and discontinuity in her reading of parody as restrictive. Hutcheon feels that a more neutral definition of repetition with critical difference alone would provide an explanation for the wide range of intent and effect of twentieth century parody (20).

Gerard Genette in his comprehensive *Palimpsestes* offers a new term for what is generally called parody which he finds objectionable. His neologism “hypertextuality” fixates on the relations of a particular text to an earlier one. While Genette’s omission in his definition of the usual clause about comic or ridiculing effect is welcomed by Hutcheon, she rejects it as “transhistorical” (21).

Hutcheon’s reading of parody stresses both its formal and pragmatic aspects. Her partial rejection of Genette’s model comes from his insistence on formal structural properties alone, whereas for Hutcheon parody is more active than passive, depending on the decoding process of the reader. However, she borrows Bakhtin’s term “textual dialogism” to acknowledge her sympathy with Genette while seeing “parody as a formal or structural relation between two texts” (22). However, the limits of Genette’s formalism can only be transcended by employing the pragmatic semiotic tools of Umberto Eco who sees in parody a clear textual strategy.
"elicited by discursive structures" that overrides any "whimsical initiative" from the reader (Hutcheon 22).

Richard Terry suggests that parody can exist only where there is a climate of sensitivity to language differentiation (87). David Bennet adopts a quite contrary position against Eco’s strategy of parody “elicited by discursive structures.” Suggesting a number of interpretations to William Carlos Williams’ “Red Wheel Barrow,” he argues that “parody is the effect of a particular, intertextual strategy of reading...” (28). He even goes to the extent of claiming for much critical quotation a parodistic function particularly in the revision of literary history. For Bennet, the parodistic reading of a text is either

intentionalist or voluntarist: either it presupposes a complicity between the reader and the author in their critical apprehension of the way the parodied discourse misfigures reality, or it is motivated by interests extrinsic to the text for which the reader is accountable (30).

Bakhtin also remarks that the process of using quotations in the Middle Ages was highly gordian and tenebrous. The relationship to the “word” of another person was equally byzantine and equivocal. Quotations were distorted and reinterpreted intentionally very frequently (69).
Terry Caesar hails Beerbohm as the “finest flower of Victorian parody” and argues that he ought to be placed among such modernist writers of his time like Eliot, Pound and Joyce (27). He says that the kind of writing he shaped was in some ways similar to that of the above writers as he too had to confront “the common problem of inherited form and false orders” (23-24). Like these modernists, parody was also a potent writing strategy for Beerbohm. In the Victorian period, the tension between poetry and the novel increased to the rebellion of the latter against “the tyranny of the authority of poetry, from which the Victorians sought to distance themselves or otherwise come to terms with through parody” (27). This probably led to the rise of such a great modernist novelist as Joyce himself.

F.R. Leavis nurtured an outspoken contempt for all parodists and even went to the extent of terming parody as “the worst enemy of creative genius and vital originality” (Caesar 37). He was particularly hard on Max Beerbohm in this regard especially at a time when the major contemporary writers were appropriating parody as one of their major modes of representation. Caesar concludes that the “energies” which silently operated to weave Beerbohm’s Christmas Garland were much the same stuff out of which the great Modernists of his time spunned out their celebrated works.
Osip Mandelstam, the noted Russian poet, once observed that "feminine poetry is an unconscious parody of both poetic inventions and remembrances" (Suleiman 141). Popular myths have become the favourite targets of writers experimenting with fresh methods of representation. This process of refunctioning has been adeptly utilized by many new women writers as well. According to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar writing in 1979:

Some of the best known recent poetry by women openly uses... parody in the cause of feminism: traditional figures of patriarchal mythology like Circe, Leda, Cassandra, Medusa, Helen, and Persephone have all lately been reinvented in the images of their female creators, and each poem devoted to one of these figures is a reading that reinvents her original story (Suleiman 142).

Suleiman has made a sincere attempt at a detailed analysis of Leonara Carrington’s comic novel, The Hearing Trumpet, which is a feminist parodic refunctioning of many old myths including that of the quest for the Holy Grail. Jean Winterson’s first novel, Oranges are not the only Fruit is an anti-patriarchal feminist parody whose chapter-titles correspond to the books of the Old Testament (Suleiman 163). Here is an instance of postmodern, feminist, sacred parody challenging the straight-forward narrative of the direct word.
The Canadian writer Timothy Findley’s *Not Wanted on the Voyage* is a refunctioning of the biblical story of Noah’s ark. The central figure is of course the tyrannical Dr. Noah Noyes. In Findley’s post-colonial vision, the story of the Ark is not “a story of redemption, but of marginalization and destruction” (Ashcroft 98). By appropriating the interpretative role over the imposed hierarchy of the little world in which he is the dominant, Dr. Noyes unleashes a tyranny down the pyramid of his structured kingdom where the unfortunate animals wince at the bottom, with the womenfolk and the other members of his family (menfolk) only marginally above them. Once when a small white flake of ash (indicative of fire and destruction) happened to glide down from the sky, Dr. Noyes was quick to label it as snow, in spite of Ham’s indignant protests to the contrary:

> Even where common sense and knowledge dictate a different interpretation, Dr. Noyes will insist on a reading of the event which confirms his position. Principles of ritual and tradition are therefore the self-serving ratifiers of Noyes’ views and the basis of his power (Ashcroft 99).

The basic irreverence and the tenor of challenge suggested throughout the book puts it directly out of focus with the straight-forward texts of tradition and guarantees it a place
among the umpteen, quintessentially post-colonial, writing-back-at-the-centre books.

In Julian Barnes’ book, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, is embedded yet another refunctioning of the Genesis story of Noah and the Ark. Barnes presents a realistic down-to-earth picture of the Ark with its unbearable stench and few volunteers to ‘muck out,’ especially the hold where the rhinos, the hippos and the elephants were caged; not for Barnes an idealized ‘nursery version’ of an Ark with well-scrubbed stalls. The Ark is hardly an ideal nature reserve, rather it is likened to a prison-ship replete with back-stabbing, information-gathering spies. The animals do not relish the trip; rather, their hardships read like the reported travails of elephants at our present-day gaja-melas in Kerala aimed at attracting foreign tourists but which has only indirectly resulted in cruelty to the animals. Naturally enough, the animals in the Ark do not enjoy, they just endure. Barnes’ choice of such an insignificant creature as the woodworm in the role of the narrator enhances the afterglow of his whole refunctioning strategy.

According to Barnes, Noah’s ark was not just a single ship, “(you could hardly expect to cram the entire animal kingdom into something a mere three hundred cubits long),” but “a whole flotilla” of eight vessels, and the eighth vessel even had the whiff of profligation about it. Moreover, it
rained not for forty days and forty nights as described in the biblical story, but for about a year and a half; the waters took four years to recede and not just a hundred and fifty days. Being a stowaway, the woodworm – the narrator, is under no sense of obligation: "...gratitude puts no smear of Vaseline on the lens" (4). He therefore claims neutrality in his narration. But before long, it becomes obvious who the narrator is speaking for. His standpoint becomes increasingly steeped in the discourse of the other. He declaims the biblical story of the serpent as “Adam’s black propaganda” and even dares to call that revered biblical figure Noah “an old rogue with a drink problem” (6). The narrator, after all, was a stowaway only because he was not wanted on the Voyage, thanks to Noah’s highly discriminatory policy of animal selection for the voyage.

Patricia Waugh views parody as a dynamic, iconoclastic, deconstructive, literary form which works against decadence and conventionalization of earlier and existing sets of literary practices. As far as Waugh is concerned, parody can be considered as “another lever of positive literary change” (64). She assigns to parody a recurring function as far as the development of fiction is concerned: “In fact, new developments in fiction have always tended to evolve through the parody of older or outworn convictions” (69). Hutcheon also concurs that parody acts as a catalyst in the evolution
and eventual substitution of aesthetic forms in history: “Out of the union of chivalric romance and a new literary concern for everyday realism came *Don Quijote* and the novel as we know it today” (35). According to Northrop Frye, parody is “often a sign that certain vogues in handling conventions are getting worn out” (103).

In this context it must be said that Tharoor’s *GIN* is a literary milestone which proclaims that the earlier straightforward ways of fictionalizing are in the process of getting worn out. Even though Tharoor does not ridicule the target text, ancient customs and traditions are more often than not spared. Ved Vyas, after all, is only one among a countless number of travelling salesmen of salvation. And such learned itinerant Brahmins were offered, apart from his host’s hospitality, his daughter as well “because they were a lot more understanding then” (*GIN* 19). Satyavati’s father had a senior midwife conduct a virginity-test in which her hymen was found to be intact; and this, after conceiving a son Ved Vyas off Parashar, for “Brahmins knew a great deal in those days” (*GIN* 21).

According to Tharoor, Shantanu was only “a fourteen - or even an eleven-gunner” (*GIN* 21); that is, he received only the above-numbered gun-salute from the British out of a total possible twenty-one.
Again, it was only a stray wind that showered petals on to Ganga Datta’s head and not the gods as portrayed in the Mahabharata, when he publicly renounced marriage in order to enable his father to marry Satyavati.

Speaking about bigamy, Tharoor comments that monogamy was not practised in India before the British came, “indeed that barbarism would come only after Independence.”

Salva, the king of Saubal who loves Amba, is “a Cambridge blue” who gives a Bollywood-like chase in his Hispano-Suiza when Ganga Datta makes off with the three princesses in his own “stately Rolls” (26). As for Vichitravirya, the sensuousness of Ambika and Ambalika is enough to drive him into a terminally priapic condition.

Bakhtin views traditional genres like the epic and tragedy as dead languages with “a hardened and no longer flexible skeleton” (3). They completed their development very early and now stand almost obsolete. The novel, on the other hand, is a young and the only developing genre in literature at present. In the period prior to the rise of the novel, literature was replete with parodies and travesties of all the high genres. More significantly, it may be noted that throughout the entire history of the novel, dominant or fashionable novels were always parodied. The unique ability of self-reflexity is evident in Sorel’s Le Berger Extravagant and
Fielding's *The Second Grandison of Musaus*, to mention early examples (6).

The importance of the Menippean satire in the process of novelisation has always been underestimated, although it exerted considerable influence on old Christian literature of the ancient period while the genre derived its name from the philosopher Menippus of Gadara who lived in the third century, the term itself for the specific genre was first introduced by the Roman scholar Varro of the first century B.C. (Bakhtin 112-113). The Menippean satire made free use of fantasy from a totally different observational plane that was completely alien to the ancient epic and tragedy. The menippaea was also characterized by the constant use of other inserted genres like novellas, letters, symposia and so on. Here it would be worthwhile to point out that G.V. Desani’s *All About H. Hatterr* contains a diluted concoction of Menippean and Rabelaisian humour. Rushdie and Tharoor, afterwards, continued to write after them, albeit in their own idiosyncratic ways.

Parody is the life-force of the Menippean satire. As Bakhtin puts it: "To the pure genres [epic, tragedy] parody is organically alien; to the carnivalized genres it is, on the contrary, organically inherent" (127). Parody has a renewing mission. It reinvigorates whatever is moribund in the backward-looking genres like the epic and the tragedy.
Tharoor’s treatment of Gangaji (Gandhiji) has the effect of the carnivalistic legend, which is different from the epic legend in which the protagonist is mountainized. According to Bakhtin:

[the strategy of the carnivalistic legend is to]
...debase the hero and bring him down to earth, make him familiar, bring him close, humanize him; ambivalent carnival laughter burns away all that is stilted and stiff, but in no way destroys the heroic core of the image (133).

Hutcheon says that the three tropes of parody, irony and satire remain confused in the minds of the ordinary reader as they are rarely seen in their pure state in actual artistic usage. She therefore presents a model in which these ethos overlap and intermingle in shifting circles (55). She considers irony as both conservative and ameliorative (65).

She observes that parody flourishes primarily in democratic “culturally sophisticated societies.” To reinforce her argument, she points to the paradigmatic cases of Greece where this genre flourished with the satyr plays and the comedies of Aristophanes. Conversely, she takes the case of early Hebrew and Egyptian literature where there is no evidence of any parodic practice or tradition. She also refers to the twin impulses of parody – revolutionary and reformative as in Bakhtin’s “double-voicing,” or conservative
as in the traditional dictionary definition of parody with its stress on the ridiculing aspect. Therefore, while parody ensures cultural continuance, it also facilitates cultural change (94).

In the GIN, Tharoor deliberately introduces anachronism whenever he can. Thus Satyavati had her son Vichitravirya’s wedding invitation-cards printed. Again, rejected by Raja Salva, a tear-stained Amba returns to Hastinapur in a train.

The traditional role of the ‘dharampatni’ is questioned by Tharoor. Gandhari’s act of choosing to blindfold herself is revealed as foolish. The blind Dhritarashtra himself hints to her that she could be of infinitely more use to him as she was than with a blindfold on. But Gandhari determinedly refuses, commenting that a wife or a ‘dharampatni’ should be judged not by parameters of utility. In her own words:

...a dharampatni is not expected to be useful. Her duty is to share the life of her husband, its joys and triumphs and sorrows, to be by his side at all times, and to give him sons... A hundred sons (GIN 64).

Tharoor’s ranting Ved Vyasa not infrequently rambles into the cricket field as well, exploiting this game’s terminology. He speaks of his “long innings at the karmic crease.” He is characteristically proud of his knowledge of the game. In fact, he claims to “know a great deal about a great deal.” He
also admits to reading the Vedas and at the same time enunciating the laws of cricket. He also refers to the "unplayable shooter" bowling you out, and of the batsman's vital ability of "seeing the ball well and timing the fours off the sweet of the bat." God is referred to as "the Great Cosmic Umpire" who is positioned not behind the stumps at the bowling end but "He is the chap up there" (GIN 65).

The twentieth century Ved Vyasa frequently breaks off into versification, sometimes parodying even film songs. Thus the song "Raindrop on Roses" from the popular movie The Sound of Music is seen clearly parodied:

groupies with rupees and large solar topis,
bakers and fakers and enema-takers,
journalists who promoted his cause with their pen,
these were among his [Ganga's] favourite men!

(GIN 68)

Now let us compare it with the original:

Raindrops on roses, and whiskers on kittens
Bright copper kettles and warm woolen mittens
Brown paper packages tied up with string
These are a few of my favourite things

(The Sound of Music N.pag.)

Tharoor also parodies the prose style of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan biographies:
How about this, O long-nosed one? In discourse his Pandu’s speech became erudite, his tone measured. In debate he thought high and aimed low. He became adept at religion, generous in philanthropy and calm in continence (GIN 69).

We also come across Tharoor’s parody of the Miltonic-Homeric kind of epic style:

Where shall we rejoin Pandu? ... Shall we intrude upon him as he tells his red-eared Madri of lustful Vrihaspati, who forced his attentions upon his pregnant sister-in-law Mamta, and found his ejaculation blocked by the embryonic feet of his yet-to-be-born nephew? Or of the Brahmin youth who turned himself into a deer to enjoy the freedom to fornicate in the forest, until he was felled by a sharp-shooting prince on a solitary hunt? (GIN 69).

And yet again on page 165:

Shall I tell of Karna’s dramatic rise to national importance through his dominance of the Muslim Group? Of the mass meetings he began to address, in impeccable English, with robed and bearded mullahs by his side, speaking to Muslim peasants to whom he seemed as foreign as the Viceroy, and who yet – another Indian inconsistency – hailed him as their supreme leader?
Tharoor employs the trope of irony wherever he can, sometimes with devastating effect. In his habitual monologic discourse with the South Indian scribe, the long-nosed Ganapathi (who remains silent throughout the book with his expressive reactions being read out by V.V. himself from time to time), while commenting on the conservatism of Indian women, chastises them “for ever clinging to the traditions of the last century [monogamy] and ignoring those of the last millennium [polygamy]...” Again, when Pandu expostulates with the (oxymoronic) “faithfully infidelious” Kunti on the subject of the traditional practice which allowed women to make love to almost anybody of their choice, concludes with the stunning paradox: “It may seem funny to you, but the deeper I steep myself in our traditions the more liberal I become” (GIN 71).

Ved Vyasa also does not hesitate to put in a word about “the fabled British gentlemanliness” which includes such courteous behaviour as “let-me-take-your-glasses-off-your-face-before-I-punch-you-in-the-nose” (GIN 77).

The Pandavas are referred to as “The Famous Five” instantly reminding us of Enid Blyton’s kid-heroes, and maybe, also to suggest that the Pandavas are vastly elephantized in the ancient epic, like the treatment of heroes in children’s tales (GIN 151).
It is cricket that the Pandavas play and not any other ancient ball game; and it takes Drona to retrieve their cricket-ball which they lose in the disused well.

Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, is portrayed as a fashionable lady who smokes Turkish cigarettes (GIN 265).

Tharoor also parodies the form of the telegram in the one sent by Purochan Lal to Priya Duryodhani:

CONTACT ESTABLISHED STOP FIVE FULLY TRUSTING STOP MOVING TO PRE-TREATED HOUSE TOMORROW STOP PREPARATIONS MADE AS DISCUSSED STOP PLEASE ADVISE WHEN TO START STOP KINDLY CONTINUE REMIT FUNDS WITHOUT STOP STOP PUROCHAN LAL (GIN 282).

And yet again when Vidur sends a cable to Purochan Lal, Tharoor’s parody of the form of the telegram is maintained:

FOR PUROCHAN LALL STOP MESSAGE RECEIVED STOP DO NOT DO ANYTHING TILL EYE TELL YOU TO START STOP CONTINUE YOUR PREPARATIONS AND DO NOT STOP STOP PLEASE DRAFT CABLES MORE CAREFULLY AND DO NOT END SENTENCES WITH STOP STOP YOU SEE HOW CONFUSING THIS IS STOP FUNDS ARE MY RESPONSIBILITY AND THEY WILL NOT STOP STOP ESPECIALLY IF YOU STOP STOP STOP (GIN 282).

Tharoor sometimes employs allegory as in the presentation of Draupadi who has an additional name appended, namely, Mokrasi. Thus the stripping of Draupadi by Duhshahsanan in the
court of the Kauravas is projected as the abuse of democracy by authoritarian regimes like that of Indira Gandhi’s during the Emergency. Needless to say, Draupadi Mokrasi represents Democracy. Tharoor portrays the battle of Kurukshetra allegorically: it takes place in the ballot-box at a general election in India, and not on any material field. Krishna, who is approached by both sides to contest for a parliamentary seat, offers the two sides the option of choosing either himself as a campaigner (and not as a candidate) or the services and resources of his skilled and experienced party-workers. Arjun’s self-doubts at Kurukshetra take place, in Tharoor’s work, just as he is about to file his nomination-papers, the question being not one of killing or not killing one’s own relatives but whether he should contest at all or just continue with his career as a journalist.

Tharoor also uses the epic Mahabharata to snipe at various ancient customs in India. One such practice is that of ‘niyoga’ in which a woman may have sons from an extra-marital relationship with the husband’s connivance and consent.

Michael Hannoosh argues that parody challenges the very idea of the fixity of works:

It provides a new version of an old story, but cannot legitimately propose itself as the definitive one, since by its own example it belies the concept
of a definitive or authoritative work altogether (114).

Also, when we discuss parody it is worthwhile to have a look at self-parody, which R.Poirier describes as a "distinctly modern form" (Hannoosh 114). Self-parody is a self-ridiculing act, the target being not any particular text but the activity of literary creation in general. In so doing, the writer parodies the act of writing itself. R.Poirier points out Joyce, Nabokov and Borges as practitioners of this form. Even Jane Austen has employed it in the famous fifth chapter of *Northanger Abbey* in which the author presents her own novel as the subject of a later work. *Northanger Abbey* is frequently viewed as a part parody of the gothic novel (Hannoosh 114).

Self-parody is also to be found in Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, in which the hero Saleem Sinai is portrayed not as having heroic virtues but as being just the opposite. He even does, though unwittingly, an act of voyeurism on his own mother. He is also recruited by the Pakistani army as a "man-dog" because of his abnormally sensitive smell:

This metamorphosis is one of a string of transmutations throughout the novel as characters change names or even personalities (Parvati into Jamila Singer, Saleem’s ego into the many egos of the Midnight’s Children, etc). Like the fantastic
metamorphosis in Kafka’s story, Saleem’s transmogrification into a man-dog suggests some deep self-loathing; most of the novel’s humour goes into self-parody which might have something to do with the narrator’s confessional invention, that the ‘truth’ is too dark to be directly revealed (Shepherd 40).

Brennan also suggests that Midnight’s Children often becomes a parodic exercise of the so-called ‘Novel of Empire.’ Dr. Aziz may be seen as referring to the Aziz of E.M. Forster’s A Passage to India:

Similarly, by virtue of Saleem’s telepathic powers, all the magical children of Midnight are assembled together in a ‘Midnight’s Children’s Conference’ (MCC), whose members never actually meet but who communicate with one another through Saleem’s mental transmissions — a kind of All-India Congress: a bitter allusion to the passage in Paul Scott’s The Jewel in the Crown in which the Anglicised Indian, Hari Kumar (Harry Coomer) is said to belong to the ‘Mayapore Indian Club. The Mayapore Chatterjee Club. The MCC. The Other Club. The wrong One’ — in other words, not the famous British refuge of colonial privilege, the Marylebone Cricket Club (82).
Finally, it may be added that no project on parody will be complete without at least a mention of the great parodists of the Augustan Age. However, a treatment of this Age or its writers in detail would be quite beyond the scope of the present thesis. So, keeping this limiting factor in mind, let us enter into the very briefest of discussions about this Age.

It should be noted, in the first place, that Richard Terry considers the Augustan Age as the "first great age of parody, the period in which it became both prolific and mainstream." In his view, "Deference and indignation, imitation and grotesquerie, could all fall within parody's ambit" (76). Speaking about the conditions that proved beneficial for the growth of eighteenth century parody, Terry suggests that as the prolificacy of literary products creates a sense of congestion it invariably turns self-reflexive. As he puts it:

Pope's Dunciad is not merely a satire on book culture, but a self-reflexive parody of the book. Like Swift's earlier A Tale of a Tub, it reproduces, in bloated form, the apparatus of print: the dedication, prefatory materials, digressions, and footnotes that swaddle the naked text. Though comic, the vision remains grimly apocalyptic, one of text engendering text in a frenzy of verbal accretion (77).
Terry considers the direct quotation as "the most scrupulously exact as well as the most economical" form of parody. Pope resorted to this technique in both Peri Bathous and The Dunciad with considerable success. Referring to Peri Bathous, Terry adds:

The work bases itself upon the new conventions of descriptive literary criticism, consisting of citation and commentary, except that Pope's commentary is replete with parodic insinuation: the parody, in other words, arising not from distorting but from recontextualizing 'the original' (79).

It is highly illuminating if we consider the notions of parody in the eighteenth century, particularly those of Johnson and Dryden. The former in his Dictionary (1755) defined parody as "A kind of writing, in which the words of an author ... are taken, and by a slight change adapted to some new purpose." Terry is of the opinion that Johnson's definition was probably modelled on Dryden's earlier definition of parody as "verses patched up from great poets, and turned into another sense than their author intended them" (86). Thus, from the above two quotes, it is clear that in the eighteenth century parody was being seen as a sort of literary theft. Writes Terry about the technique of Dunciad:

Pope's meticulous anthologizing of the words of opponents relishes of illicit appropriation, taking
words hostage, which was a perniciousness that parody frequently intended. His cruelest barb against the dunces, that their mummification within his own poem provided their only gateway to posterity...

was a taunt which proved to be only too true. For Terry, it is but natural that parody would flourish only "where there prevails a reasonable degree of sensitivity to differentiation of language" (87). In the _Rape of the Lock_, Clarissa's speech is a parody of Sardepon's verbalization to Glaucus in _Iliad XII_ (87-88). Also, Swift defines parody as being "where the Author personates the Style and Manner of other Writers, whom he has a mind to expose" (Terry 89).

From this brief survey of parody in various milieux, it must be quite clear that this genre has always been a much-discussed form in literary debate and popular with diverse sections of society. If parody is "the concretization of man's innate urge to rebel against authority," as I have argued at the beginning of this chapter, then the subversion of the forms and institutions imposed by authority must necessarily constitute the target of parody. It is the aim of this thesis to take up this issue of subversion in the following chapters.