CHAPTER 2

POSTMODERNISM AND THE POLITICS OF POST-COLONIAL DISCOURSE

It has been pointed out that postmodernism originated among artists and theorists in New York in the 1960s and was adopted by European theorists a decade later. Jean Francois Lyotard's *La Condition postmoderne* which appeared in 1979 is considered a key text of postmodernism along with his essay, "An Answer to the Question What is Postmodernism?" (added as an appendix to the 1984 English translation).

Lyotard has questioned the legitimacy of the grand narratives:

[such as the] overarching philosophies of history like the Enlightenment story of the gradual but steady progress of reason and freedom. Hegel's dialectic of Spirit coming to know itself, and, most importantly, Marx's drama of the forward march of human productive capacities via class conflict culminating in proletarian revolution (Fraser and Nicholson 376).

Lyotard is convinced that the "grand narratives" are no longer credible. He views postmodernism as a general condition
applicable mainly or only to contemporary western civilization.

As far as Michael Ryan is concerned, postmodernism is concerned with art just as post-structuralism relates to philosophy and social theory. In "Postmodern Politics," he states his idea of postmodernism using very definite terms, calling it a term for a movement in the arts, in advanced capitalist society with its emphasis on reflexivity, irony, artifice, randomness, anarchy, fragmentation, pastiche and allegory. It is critical regarding the progressivist dreams of modernism. Consequently, there occurs a significant shift from content to form or style (559).

In "Postal Politics and the Institution of the Nation" Geoffrey Bennington examines the problematic prefix 'post' of both post-structuralism and postmodernism. Though 'post' would normally mean 'what comes after,' 'what supersedes,' or even 'what sublates,' the 'post' is still after all only a prefix and hence 'pre,' that is, coming before and not after. As Bennington puts it:

The post is at the beginning, and precedes, in a certain linear order of the signifier, the name (structuralism, the modern) with respect to which it is thought to come after (123).

Using Lyotard's The Postmodern Condition, he makes it clear that it is not quite right to separate the modern from the
postmodern using temporal, historically ordered differentiation as this is against Lyotard's known position regarding the critique of "grand narratives" which is central to his thinking. "If the postmodern involves the decline or the loss of credibility of grand narratives, it is difficult to describe it in terms of a grand narrative of technology."
The postmodern can, therefore, never be conceived of in terms of such narratives or a break that would separate the modern and the postmodern. Bennington quotes Lyotard to make things clear: "A word can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end, but in the nascent state, and this state is constant" (123). Bennington also goes to the extent of suggesting that the prefix 'post,' be it of postmodernism or post-colonialism or post-structuralism, disturbs history.

According to Pawley, postmodernism is just another creation of

Today's paid theorists surveying the field from their booklined studies in polytechnics and universities [and] are obliged to invent movements because their careers - no less than those of miners and fishermen - depend on it. The more movements they can give names to, the more successful they will be (Featherstone 195).
Gott mentions postmodernism as a cultural and aesthetic trend in art, architecture, music, film, drama and fiction (Featherstone 195).

Lyotard has suggested that the term postmodernism is a very poorly conceived one as it conveys the concept of historical periodization. However, he sums up that 'postmodern' merely indicates "a mood, or better a state of mind." According to Baudrillard, technological and information-related progress globally contributed to "the shift from a productive to a reproductive social order so that the distinction between the real and appearance becomes erased" (Featherstone 198). However, Frederic Jameson’s concept of the postmodern is definitely periodizing as he views it as "the cultural dominant, or cultural logic, of the third great stage of capitalism, late capitalism, which originates in the post-World War Two era" (199).

Raman Selden points out that postmodern writers have eschewed "the elitism, sophisticated formal experimentation and tragic sense of alienation to be found in modernist writers." They have also rejected "the traditional aesthetics of 'Beauty' and of 'uniqueness.'" Elaborates Selden: The postmodern experience is widely held to stem from a profound sense of ontological uncertainty. Human shock in the face of the unimaginable (pollution, holocaust, the death of the 'subject')
results in a loss of fixed points of reference. Neither the world nor the self any longer possesses unity, coherence, meaning. They are radically 'decentered' (72).

And it has been frequently pointed out by many theorists that this decentering of language has led to the blossoming of the playful, self-reflexive form of parodying style in much of postmodern fiction. Frederic Jameson suggests that postmodernist culture has removed the barriers that used to separate high culture and mass culture. "The commercial culture is no longer 'quoted' and parodied in Joycean fashion but incorporated directly into postmodern art" (73).

According to Marjorie Perloff, the position adopted by Jean Francois Lyotard in La Condition postmoderne was a significant shift from David Antin's "pragmatics of postmodernism (the inside view of the practicing poet) to the broader cultural definition of the term as it is used today" (166). In her book Teaching the Postmodern, Brenda K. Marshall tries to tell us what postmodernism is all about. Among other things she is also certain that

Postmodernism is about history. But not the kind of 'History' that lets us think we can know the past... It's about chance. It's about power. It's about information. And more. And that's just a little bit of what postmodernism (is). (Perloff 176).
She also adds:

The word postmodernism does not refer to a period or a ‘movement.’ It isn’t really as ‘ism’; it isn’t really a thing. It’s a moment but more a moment in logic than in time. Temporally, it’s a space (Perloff 176).

Now let us examine the term ‘Commonwealth’ of ‘Commonwealth literature,’ the former name by which what is nowadays called post-colonial literature was known. The term ‘Commonwealth,’ was first used by Oliver Cromwell in 1649 after establishing the Republican government in England, literally “implied common good or public good; a body-politic in which power rests with the people” (Dhawan 5). Britain’s self-governing colonies of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, along with Britain of course, constituted the founder members of the Commonwealth. India opted to remain in the Commonwealth after becoming a Republic in 1950. The use of the English language was the cementing force that binded the countries of the Commonwealth. Consequently, the term ‘Commonwealth Literature’ was used to refer to the literatures written in English in the Commonwealth countries.

But the term ‘Commonwealth literature’ did not find the favour of literary theorists. Rejecting the term ‘Commonwealth literature,’ Henry Louis Gates Jr. equates it with ‘American literature’ in which he senses the existence of what he calls
a "vulgar nationalism." He considers the term 'Commonwealth literature' as a "vulgar phrase" because of the imperialism implied by it; and the jarring, hardly concealed overtones of "extra literary designations of control, symbolic of material and concomitant political relations, rather than literary ones" that characterize the term. He therefore exhorts other scholars to eschew such terms of domination and ideology. Labelling the term as 'problematic,' Diana Brydon also rejects the term 'Commonwealth literature,' but for entirely different reasons. She would like, for instance, to see the term maintain its links with the common people and the vernacular (what many people would consider 'vulgar'). And again, she does not think, like Gates, that the extra-literary and the literary can be kept separate. Says Brydon in this connection:

It is not 'the categories of domination and ideology' that we must eschew; on the contrary, we need the categories to help us understand the experiences. Domination and ideology are real; they exist, in life and in our discipline; and they are what we must combat (Brydon 7).

Rushdie concludes his essay "Commonwealth Literature does not Exist" saying:

The English language ceased to be the sole possession of the English some time ago. Perhaps 'Commonwealth literature' was invented to delay the
day when we rough beasts actually slouch into Bethlehem. In which case, it's time to admit that the centre cannot hold (Imaginary Homelands 70).

Defying the term 'Commonwealth literature,' he had declared earlier: "To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free" (Imaginary Homelands 17).

The term 'post-colonial,' though hardly adequate, has consequently come to replace the 'Commonwealth' of erstwhile 'Commonwealth literature.' According to a view, expressed in the editorial of Signs (20:4, 1995), the 'post' of 'post-colonial' does not imply "the passing of the 'colonial' (or the death of colonization) but, rather, it refers to the tensions and fissures that have always existed within the hegemony of the colonial" (788). Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin have lent such scope to the term 'post-colonial' as "to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (2). Charting the progress of post-colonial literatures, they have by and large demarcated two stages in its development. In the first stage of imperial, cultural domination, literature in the language of the centre is primarily appropriated and written by a "literate elite" who try to imitate and identify with the imperial centre. This identification with the imperialist force prevents the writer from merging fully with the latent native anti-imperial
discourse, forcing him to seek refuge behind a thin veil of pseudo-objectivity under which the colonizer’s discourse squirms uneasily and often all too visibly.

In the second stage of post-colonial writing, discourse is granted to the native. Consequently, he starts trying (in Raja Rao’s words) to “convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own” (vii). But at this stage, his is a mission of imitation of the imperial language, sometimes trying to be more English than the English themselves. The Indian English poet Henry Derozio who tried to imitate the Romantic poets, especially Keats, is a paradigmatic case of this category of writers. The post-colonial writer at this stage also apprehends his peculiar situation, that he must necessarily alter the colonialist tongue radically to satisfy his needs.

Slowly but surely, the centre’s grip loosens and the native starts the project of appropriation of the imperial language. He asserts fresh usages on the imperial language and often succeeds in making the language more flexible for his needs. Thus the post-colonial writer comprehends the value of subversion for an effective anti-colonial discourse. In Indian English writing, G.V. Desani is one among the first who realized the fascinating possibilities of employing subversive strategy in fiction. Later writers like Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor and Arundhati Roy had only to follow in his footsteps.
It is worthwhile to consider Homi Bhabha's contention that "a colonialist desire for a reformed, recognizable, nearly similar other, is enacted as parody..." The reason being that what the native re-writes is not a copy of the colonialist original, but a qualitatively different thing-in-itself, where misreadings and incongruities expose uncertainties and ambivalences of the colonialist text and deny it an authorizing presence (Parry 41-42).

Thus the mimicry inherent in native performance of the imperial script only serves to undermine it. It follows therefore that the colonialist's triumphant design for an educational system in India with the sole motive of creating natives who were Indian only in colour but Englishmen in all other respects was foredoomed to failure.

Lord Macaulay's notoriously orientalistic contempt for things Indian, and specifically Indian languages and literatures, as was evident in his famous "Minutes on Indian Education" is put to task in Tharoor's _GIN_. For Sir Richard the English resident of Hastinapur, who declares that "We're not here for a language lesson," "Hindi is a damn complicated language." Not withstanding this uncharacteristic admission, he proudly flaunts his mastery of the colonized native's tongue: "There was a banned crow" for closing the door and
“There was a cold day” for opening it (37). Needless to say, he only ends up making the reader laugh at his own expense. Affairs reach a particularly ludicrous phase when he orders the bearer to bring him the ‘bhishti,’ mistaking the word to mean a big water-jug. The elderly bearer dutifully brings in, bodily, the dirty water-carrier clad in a still dirtier loincloth. The colonizer’s inability or unwillingness to learn the native’s tongue, arising out of linguistic snobbery or both, is highlighted in this episode. On the other hand, Tharoor seems to emphasize that the native tongue is as unyielding to the colonizer’s domineering way of functioning as is the latent anti-colonial spirit of the colonized. Inherent in this episode is also the implication that while the colonizer may inhabit geographic space, linguistic domination by means of capturing the native’s tongue would prove to be all but a formidable task for the former. On the other hand, the native can always appropriate the master’s language as is evident by the present vogue achieved by various post-colonial literatures.

It is generally agreed that postmodernism emerged out of a “radical break” from the discourse of modernism, which itself centres around Euro-American culture more than any other. During the years of colonialism (which, incidentally, Ashis Nandy calls the “armed version of modernism” (xiv), modernism had equipped the imperial power with the ideological
impetus essential for the process of colonization. Even though modernism engages the plane of anti-thesis for both postmodernism and post-colonialism as they envisage some kind of negating impulse against the perceived "evils" of modernism, the critical strategy of both has continued to be "asymmetrical."

Like postmodernism, post-colonialism also employs parody to subvert the master-narratives. Tharoor's GIN undermines both the traditional act of historicization and also the ancient text of the Mahabharata interweaving the twin parodic acts into a complex mix of humour and specifically post-colonial subversion. Likewise, Findley's Not Wanted on the Voyage parodies the story of the Flood in the Old Testament. Speaking of postmodern parody, Hutcheon says that it employs the strategies of the dominant culture to subvert its discursive processes from inside (20), the post-colonial parody of Tharoor does exactly this and perhaps a little more. The narrator of the GIN is after all Ved Vyas, an eighty-eight year old master-manipulator in post-Independent Indian politics, for whom his close friend Brahm has kindly arranged an abnormally long-nosed South Indian amanuensis Ganapathi. There is nothing much to hold in reverence here - neither the narrator, nor Brahm, or Ganapathi, or even the dominant Brahmanic practices of the time of the Mahabharata.
While the concept of resistance enlivens the post-colonial project, postmodernism is enervated by “a pervasive negativity, the deferral of literary and social questions into the philosophical, and an assimilating and universalizing tendency.” Banting also accuses postmodernism of privileging the questioning impulse and, consequently, losing its ability for reply or dialogization. She envisages post-colonialism with a broader scope and energetics. As she puts it:

It encompasses a larger repertoire of responses, including affirmative refusals, snappy rejoinders, performance, vernacular languages, shamelessly parodic gestures, confabulations, bad mouthing, impure remarks, and other forms both of protest and cultural construction (7).

Slemon also subtly hints at the appropriation and incorporation of the post-colonial strategy by theorists of the postmodern such as Linda Hutcheon, who stated that postmodern parody clearly evinces its “love of history by giving new meaning to old forms” (Hutcheon 31). Slemon also accuses postmodernists of “systematically” ignoring such theorists of post-colonialism as Wilson Harris whose work he considers important. Slemon laments that postmodernism despite all its claims of having a decentring strategy has paradoxically become a centralizing institution, a western problematic whose project in the cross-
cultural sphere has become the translation of differential literary and social 'texts' into philosophical questions and cultural attitudes whose grounding in western culture is too rarely admitted. (Slemon 14).

He also denounces the "universalizing, assimilative impulse" of postmodernism which is becoming the increasingly dominant "political tendency," replicating modernism’s former concerns and which, consequently, has come to be considered a threat by several prominent post-colonial critics and theorists. And it is here, says Slemon, that "postmodernism joins hands with its modernist precursor in continuing a politics of colonialist control" (Slemon 14).

In this context, it is therefore difficult to ignore the anti-colonial critique provided by post-colonialism in general and post-colonial fiction in particular. Slemon points to the existence of an anti-colonial critical discourse in the discourse of the colonized Other, even though this "counter-culture of the imagination" may not express itself visibly in the initial stages of colonization as it happened in India (6). Since the imposition of canonical works on the colonized Other is a widespread colonial practice, the "'parodic' repetition of imperial 'textuality'" is essentially, and increasingly, being viewed as a contemporary post-colonial project. Slemon's strategy is to envisage post-colonialism as
postmodernism's last 'post.' In the concluding sentence of his essay, he expresses the hope that postmodernism may join hands with and not merely imbibe the post-colonial critical discourse, as the project of postmodernism is essentially the act of decolonizing western culture totally from the remaining grip of modernism (15).

The concept of post-colonial resistance has embodied in recent times the specific act of historicization and its subversion. It is therefore essential to broach this theme for the purposes of this thesis. As the act of historicizing involves the selection of materials that are considered "authentic," writing history itself involves the politics of choosing and ignoring what may in actuality be the essence of a past historical event or that which involves and includes the seminal episodes of a nation or a people. The creation of colonial historiography involves the fully political act of using colonialism's oppressive signifying system to fill the natives with a cringing inferiority complex and consequently keep them under imperial control. The crux of the post-colonial project is accordingly aimed at subverting the aforesaid system and perhaps reverting the injustice of the binary oppositions which Jacques Derrida has termed "a violent hierarchy" (Parry 30).

Apart from the calculatedly imposed canonical texts, historiography figures prominently in the imperial design of
domination over the natives. Interestingly, as far as India is concerned, the effects of colonialism linger on even after the country attained Independence. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain the immense vogue achieved by Collins and Lapierre through their work *Freedom at Midnight* which covertly seeks to glorify the English rulers as essentially superior to the natives. As far as the Indian experience of colonialism (by the British) is concerned, the imperial strategy seems to have enabled the blossoming of at least two varieties of flowers, albeit of the same genus: the first including the so-called 'Novel of Empire' like Scott’s *Raj Quartet* and E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*, the second cut encompassing those works like *Freedom at Midnight* which is based on actual personages and incidents of the era of the Raj and written with a kind of “high seriousness” after admittedly much painstaking research.

One of post-colonialism’s primary concerns should be the identification and consequent overturning of colonialism’s “loaded oppositions,” even if that means adopting “Fanon’s offensive strategy [of] repossessing the signifying function appropriated by colonialist representation.” This also connotes the dismantling and displacing of “the received narrative of colonialism’s moment written by ruling-class historiography and perpetuated by the nationalist version...” (Parry 28).
The British as the colonizing power in India had their own effective imperial machinery to create their separate version of history to suit their particular interests. *Freedom at Midnight*, even though it was published as late as 1976, merely continues the tradition of colonially slanted historiography picturizing, and even glorifying, the British administrators as efficient, under the given circumstances, and thereby implying that the colonized are a "racially degenerate population" (Parry 40); thereby justifying colonial rule. Aruna Srivastava has rightly commented that "The act of creating histories... is an ideological act, designed to support political and moral systems" (63).

Like Rushdie who questions the linear narrative of received history, Tharoor also roams randomly in his parodic rendering of Indian history, but not so much as the former's outright rejection of Padma's 'what-happened-nextism.' Tharoor's narrator Ved Vyas is an eighty-eight year old Indian politician on the verge of retirement. His reminiscences plunge us immediately into a diverse heap of chronologically disjointed jumble of historic hotbeds of action. First straight to the time of the *Mahabharata* with Parashar fathering the narrator himself from the fish-odorous Satyavati (Book I: Chapter 2); then through the parodic act of the British Resident disapproving the alliance of King Shantanu to the fisherman's daughter, Satyavati (Bk. I: Ch. 4); the firing
episode at the Bibigah Gardens (read Jallianwallah Bagh) (Bk. IV: Ch.19); the Gangaji-led peasant uprising at Motihari (Bk. II: Ch.12), and so on.

It is interesting to note that Tharoor's *GIN* frequently works as a parodic commentary of such works as *Freedom at Midnight* in which the British administrators in India are time and again elephantized in a covert manner. The authors set the tone of colonial eulogy as early as page 11 in the choice of adjectives. First of all, the Viceroy Sir Archibald Wavell is described as "honest," "forthright," and "kind-hearted." Consequently, such an "honest," "forthright," and "kind-hearted" person as Lord Wavell can do no harm; but also, conversely, only good to the 'native' Indians. Again, the British imperial adventure in India is described as "great" and "History's most grandiose accomplishments" (10). Further, Lord Hastings is quoted as saying that the British domination of India was unintentional. The British may have been guilty of colonization, but they endowed the country with "benefits of considerable magnitude, Pax Britannica and reasonable facsimiles of Britain's own legal, administrative and educational institutions." It also gave India the "magnificent gift" of the English language. The 'Mutiny' of 1857 is given only a negative epithet "savage." Rudyard Kipling is quoted as referring to the Indians as "lesser breeds," and justifying colonialism by the British claiming that the task of governing
India had been “placed by the inscrutable decree of providence upon the shoulders of the British race” (12). The British officers are “gentlemen” of “impeccable breeding,” the children of “good” Anglican clergymen, “talented” offspring of the aristocracy and so forth. After all, as James S. Mill observed, India was only a means of “outdoor relief for Britain’s upper classes” (13). Collins also portrays the British officers as “able and incorruptible” with only an “occasional exception.” Such officers, that is, the vast majority comprising idealized officers, were “determined to administer India in its own best interests...” But what those particular “interests” should be was determined by the British themselves and not by the Indians whom they governed (16).

Tharoor takes such historiographers to task with a brutal thrust:

Some of our more Manichean historians tend to depict the British villains as supremely accomplished - the omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent manipulators of the destiny of India. Stuff and nonsense, of course. For every brilliant Briton who came to India, there were at least five who were incapable of original thought and fifteen who were only capable of original sin (GIN 116).

In recent times historiography has come to be seen increasingly as a form of invented narrative rather than a
body of objective writing about events that took place in the past. According to Richard Paul Knowles, historiography, in postmodern parlance, attains the status of the continuing "process of remaking history, of 'making it new,' as fiction and myth" (228). Probing the extent of the instability is very often the favourite pastime of both the postmodern and the post-colonial writer. Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* mixes myth, fiction and history. Tharoor also does the same in the *GIN*. By way of his "historiographic metafiction," he subverts and questions the validity of 'official' history. He also employs the self-reflexive strategy of metafictionalizing the traditional epic *Mahabharata*.

J.G. Farrell’s Booker Prize-winning novel *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973) actually foregrounds the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, while Paul Scott’s *Staying on* (1978), yet another Booker Prize-winner, which is in fact a coda to *The Raj Quartet*, is set in the period between the Quit India movement in 1942 to the Partition and Independence. While Farrell’s novel mildly questions "the moral implications of the policy of social aloofness and racial distance that marked the last decades of the Raj" (Couto 61), Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, again a Booker Prize-winner, starts from the moment of the birth of independent India at the midnight of 15 August 1947.

Brian McHale suggests that postmodernist fiction tries to transgress ontological limits particularly in its act of
rewriting or fictionalizing 'official' history. Even though earlier practitioners of historical fiction like Scott had carefully tested such boundaries, postmodernist fiction writers try to make this transgression as noticeably jarring as possible. As McHale puts it:

The postmodernist historical novel is revisionist in two senses. First, it revises the content of the historical record, reinterpreting the historical record, often demystifying or debunking the orthodox version of the past. Secondly, it revises, indeed transforms, the conventions and norms of historical fiction itself (90).

By making the act of rewriting or subverting history a postmodern phenomenon, McHale bares himself to the charge of critics like Sleamon who have blamed the advocates of postmodernism with appropriating the favourite tools and techniques of post-colonial writers. In fact, Rushdie and Tharoor, both predominantly post-colonial rather than postmodern writers, have proved themselves to be masters in the art of subverting history. But McHale goes on:

The two meanings of revisionism converge especially in the postmodernist strategy of apocryphal or alternative history. Apocryphal history contradicts the official version in one of two ways: either it supplements the historical record, claiming to
restore what has been lost or suppressed; or it displaces official history altogether. In the first of these cases, apocryphal history operates in the ‘dark areas’ of history, apparently in conformity to the norms of ‘classic’ historical fiction but in fact parodying them. In the second case, apocryphal history spectacularly violates the ‘dark areas’ constraint. In both cases, the effect is to juxtapose the officially-accepted version of what happened and the way things were, with another, often radically-dissimilar version of the world. The tension between these two versions induces a form of ontological flicker between the two worlds: one moment, the official version seems to be eclipsed by the apocryphal version; the next moment, it is the apocryphal version that seems mirage-like, the official version appearing solid, irrefutable (90).

Tharoor has used anachronism very creatively in the GIN. To cite just one instance, the Raja Salva of Saubal chases Ganga Datta in his customized Hispano-Suiza while the latter himself makes off with the princesses in his Rolls Royce. The time-frame of the novel, even though names of characters tend to resemble those of the Mahabharata, is located towards the turn of the twentieth century up till the end of the reign of the Janata Party. The humour and interest is heightened by the
figure of Gangaji, the subversive depiction of Gandhiji, going about in a luxury car. Writes McHale:

Anachronism in material culture is rare even among the postmodernists... Exceptions occur (for eg.) in Reed’s Flight to Canada, where twentieth-century technology (telephone, television, automobile, aircraft) is superimposed on nineteenth century history; and also in Mumbo-Jumbo, where the secret Wallflower Order is already credited in the 1920s with possessing post-World War II technology, including television, synthetic materials ('polyurethane, polystyrene, Lucite, Plexiglas, acrylate, Mylar, Teflon, phenolic, polycarbonate') and the potential for space-flight. (93).

McHale also distinguishes between “classic” historical fiction and postmodernist historical fiction. He says that while the former endeavours to disguise anachronism, the latter boldly flaunts it (93).

In McHale’s view, Rushdie blends historical fantasy with secret history in Midnight’s Children. As he puts it:

Indian history since independence, according to this text, is supernaturally linked to the fates of the children born at the same time as the state itself, midnight on August 15, 1947. Supernatural beings, each possessing some miraculous power or talent —
the power to read minds, to change shape, to pass through looking-glasses, to inspire instant infatuation in others, to perform magic, and so on - their existence is a secret; only through the telepathy of one of their number, Saleem, the novel’s narrator, do the midnight children become aware of one another. As supernatural figures, they are symptomatic of the intrinsically fantastic nature of Indian reality; but more than that, they, and especially their spokesman Saleem, are microcosms of the Indian macrocosm, paralleling or mirroring public history in their private histories (95).

McHale while partly validating the arguments of moralizing critics like John Gardner or Gerald Graff regarding the ‘falsification’ of official history by writers like Rushdie adds:

From this point of view, history is the record of real human action and suffering, and is not to be tampered with lightly; inventing apocryphal or fantastic or deliberately anachronistic versions of history is a betrayal of that record. This would be unassailably true, if only we could be sure that the historical record reliably captured the experience of the human beings who really suffered and enacted
history. But that is the last thing we can be sure of, and one of the thrusts of postmodernist revisionist history is to call into question the reliability of official history. The postmodernists fictionalize history; but by doing so they imply that history itself may be a form of fiction (96).

Also, McHale sees official history as a form of fiction, since it is reported in our times, by journalists or film crew. So he says:

In postmodernist revisionist historical fiction, history and fiction exchange places, history becoming fictional and fiction becoming ‘true’ history - and the real world seems to get lost in the shuffle (96).

Writing about postmodernist fantasy, Shepherd feels that this kind of writing seeks solutions knowing that solutions are not possible, and it is therefore a literature of frustrated desires; it is a polemical literature which engages a kind of underground resistance, though remaining fearful of the brutality of the enemy with a fear that almost amounts to paranoia: it is a confessional kind of literature in which the dimly discerned goal seems to be self-revelation; it is a literature which sets out to deliberately
subvert any easy notion of objective reality, and is intent on holding reality up to constant and unremitting interrogation (35).

However it may be argued that Shepherd was speaking mainly about *Midnight’s Children*. Even though there are elements of fantasy in the GIN with the narrator frequently breaking into dreams, there is basically no unhappiness in the GIN. Optimism is not a disease as in *Midnight’s Children*. Even though streaks of fatalism line the GIN, no character seems to suffer directly because of it.

Rushdie himself has called Saleem Sinai “an unreliable narrator” and he admits to having jotted down many inaccuracies in *Midnight’s Children*; but he tries to bail himself out by saying that his compositional method was to recount the past using memory as a tool. Rushdie says that Saleem’s story far from being history, only “plays with historical shapes” (Imaginary Homelands 25). In his *Moor’s Last Sigh* also, the seams of history and fiction often crisscross delightfully. Francisco da Gama is asked by none other than Annie Besant to found a Home Rule League in Cochin for which he is thrown into prison (19). Another character Camoens writes in his journal about his attending a meeting in the small village of Malgudi where Gandhi was to address the gathering.
Edward Said argues that stories have been used both by the colonizer and the colonized to assert their own sense of identity and history. Even though the main battle in imperialism is over the ownership and occupation of land, "...these issues were reflected, contested and even for a time decided in narrative." Homi Bhabha has even equated nations with narrations. Said continues:

The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them. Most important, the grand narratives of emancipation and enlightenment mobilized people in the colonial world to rise up and throw off imperial subjection...

Even though culture means to include the very best of a particular people or society, suggests Said:

In time, culture comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation or the state; this differentiates 'us' from 'them,' almost always with some degree of xenophobia. Culture in this sense is, a source of identity, and a rather combative one at that... (Culture and Imperialism xiii).

Said claims that the origin of the 'us/them' conflict between the colonizer and the colonized dates back to Greek thinking regarding barbarians. He seems to be unaware of the
situation which arose in India following the Aryan conquest when the indigenous population came to be looked down as 'dasyus.' Writes Said:

... by the nineteenth century it [this sense of identity] had become the hallmark of imperialist cultures as well as those cultures trying to resist the encroachments of Europe (Culture and Imperialism xxviii).

Said suggests that the colonialistic enterprise, particularly that of Britain and France, was nurtured and sustained by a massive collective effort. It is not surprising that immensely talented figures like Delacroix, Edmund Burke, Ruskin, Carlyle, James and John Stuart Mill, Kipling, Balzac, Nerval, Flaubert and Conrad contributed their mite to preserve the idea of colonialism:

There were scholars, administrators, travellers, traders, parliamentarians, merchants, novelists, theorists, speculators, adventurers, visionaries, poets, and every variety of outcast and misfit in the outlying possessions of these two imperial powers, each of whom contributed to the formation of a colonial actuality existing at the heart of metropolitan life.

For Said, 'imperialism' and 'colonialism' are different. While the former includes "the practice, the theory, and the
attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory...", 'colonialism' is a consequence of imperialism, the act of settling in a distant land. As Said puts it:

Both [imperialism and colonialism] are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination: the vocabulary of classic nineteenth century imperial culture is plentiful with such words and concepts as 'inferior' or 'subject races,' 'subordinate peoples,' 'dependency,' 'expansion,' and 'authority' (Culture and Imperialism 8).

Said is right when he says that the great Western empires were sustained and encouraged by the hope of further profit. Imperialism and colonialism were therefore deliberately planned, well-orchestrated enterprises. Says Said:

There was a commitment to them [imperialism and colonialism] over and above profit, a commitment in constant circulation and recirculation, which, on the one hand, allowed decent men and women, to accept the notion that distant territories and their native peoples should be subjugated, and, on the other, replenished metropolitan energies so
that these decent people could think of the *imperium* as a protracted, almost metaphysical obligation to rule subordinate, inferior, or less advanced peoples (*Culture and Imperialism* 10).

Said suggests that it was a considerably difficult task to maintain an empire thousands of miles away, utilizing only a limited number of civil servants and soldiers even as the natives outnumbered them quite significantly. The disparity in numbers was thus sought to be compensated by will-power, self-confidence and arrogance on the part of the British in India. This superior, but brazen, attitude was considered essential for maintaining the British Raj in India. Said says that the power of the idea of imperialism in European minds was so great that it was able to co-exist harmoniously with humanistic ideas.

Placing Rushdie in a group which includes such writers as Mario Vargas Llosa, Derek Walcott, Isabel Allende, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and Bharati Mukherjee, Timothy Brennan labels them "Third-World cosmopolitans" because they were "writers who, in a sense, allowed a flirtation with change that ensured continuity, a familiar strangeness, a trauma by inches" (viii). Speaking about the blooming of post-colonial writers, Rushdie says that English is no more a language of the British as it is nourished from many roots, "... and those whom it
once colonised are carving out large territories within the language for themselves” (Brennan 6).

Critics like Rudolph Bader have demonstrated how Midnight’s Children resembles Grass’ The Tin Drum in the matter of techniques employed:

... the structuring of historical memory through photos and newspaper clippings, the wilful exoticism of dwarfs, magicians, gypsies and cripples; the mixing of ‘fairytales style... court evidence, school essay, public speech and other variations of the narrative mode’ until the effect is one of ‘simultaneity of past, present and future’ (Brennan 81).

Graham Huggan is of the view that even though the feasibility of mimetic representation has been challenged since the time of Plato, “... mimesis has consistently provided a means of promoting and reinforcing the stability of Western culture” (116). Homi Bhabha and Said have argued convincingly about the imperial practice of using mimesis for colonial discourse

... which justifies the dispossession and subjugation of so-called ‘non-western’ peoples; for the representation of reality endorsed by mimesis is after all, the representation of a particular kind or view of reality: that of the West (Huggan 116).
Huggan points out that the imitative functioning style of mimesis endeavoured to stabilize "a falsely essentialist view of the world which negates or suppresses alternative views which might endanger the privileged position of its Western perceiver" (116). Said has stressed that the seeming stability of imperial discursive structures has been threatened both by "historical forces" with its inherent natural tendency to challenge the discursive formation of the colonizing group and by difficulties and inconsistencies within the system itself. The above-mentioned inconsistencies are revealed only when the colonialist’s discursive system is imposed on peoples who are culturally different from that of the dominant group (Huggan 116).

Bhabha has suggested that colonial discourse is the battlefield of a clash between the 'self' and the 'other,'

... between the Western desire for a uniform self and the need to define that self against reformed 'others' which, although produced in the self’s likeness, are never quite the same; the result is a double articulation in which the 'representation of a difference... is itself a process of disavowal.' The destabilizing process set in motion by colonial mimicry produces a set of deceptive, even derisive, 'resemblances' which implicitly question the
homogenizing practices of colonial discourse (Huggan 117).

The so-called ‘universal’ mode of representation is seen as a set of rhetorical strategy aimed at strengthening the European point of view.

Jonathan Culler has pointed out:

[that] ... the disruptive manoeuvres involved in deconstructionist activity shift emphasis from a conceptual opposition based on binary logic to an ideological imposition where that logic is used to justify, maintain and reinforce a specific socio-political system based on rigidly defined relations of power. (Huggan 122).

Huggan is confident that deconstruction can be made to be seen as a useful weapon to expose and undermine dominant systems such as the Eurocentric colonial discursive structures mentioned earlier. It may be recalled that deconstructive practice has been frequently blasted as

... a decontextualized theory which leads to a form of political quietism through its deferral of the decisions which might engender social change, a form of philosophical anarchism through its insistent refutation of ‘standard’ wisdoms (Hulme; Felperin), or a paradoxical reinforcement of Western authoritarianism through its disguised relocation of,
rather than its alleged dislocation of, Western ontological and epistemological biases... (Huggan 122).

Writing of the “fascination” of post-colonial writers for cartographic representation, Huggan suggests:

The map no longer features as a visual paradigm for the ontological anxiety arising from frustrated attempts to define a national culture, but rather as a locus of productive dissimilarity where the provisional connections of cartography suggest an ongoing perceptual transformation which in turn stresses the transitional nature of post-colonial discourse. This transformation has been placed within the context of a shift from an earlier ‘colonial’ fiction obsessed with the problems of writing in a ‘colonial space’ to a later, ‘post-colonial’ fiction which emphasizes the provisionality of all cultures and which celebrates the particular diversity of formerly colonized cultures whose ethnic mix can no longer be considered in terms of the colonial stigmas associated with mixed blood or cultural schizophrenia (124).

Joanne Tomkins says that for a time the concept of binary oppositions (which later on was equipped with an ideological thrust) was considered a very valuable critical tool. But
post-structuralism, as is well known, challenged binary oppositions effectively. Post-colonial theorists and theories, in particular have pointed out time and again the apparent problems related to the binaries. Barbara Christian, a specialist in Afro-American women’s writing, rejecting the binaries since they regard one term more central than another, says:

... we can say that the terms 'minority' and 'discourse' are located firmly in a Western dualistic or 'binary' frame which sees the rest of the world as minor, and tries to convince the rest of the world that it is major, usually through force and then through language, even as it claims many of the ideas that we, its 'historical' other, have known and spoken about for so long. For many of us have never conceived of ourselves only as somebody’s other (Tompkins 6).

Bhabha and Perry have shown how even reversing the power dynamic in favour of the underprivileged in the binary opposition cannot empower the subordinate element of the opposition in any concrete sense as "these inversions merely reinscribe the dominant colonial power formations" (Tompkins 7). As Parry has elaborated:

a reverse discourse replicating the linguistic polarities devised by a dominant centre to exclude
and act against the categorized, does not liberate the 'other' from a colonized condition where heterogeneity is repressed in the monolithic figures and stereotypes of colonialist representation, and into a free state of polymorphous native 'difference.' (Tompkins 7).

Tompkins is of the view that post-colonial literatures must (and do), in order to create a literary and political distance from the colonial power structures, reject what Parry terms “the founding concepts of the problematic.” Bhabha’s rejection of the binary oppositions is because of the absence of clear and consistent constructions for both halves of the binary equation (Tompkins 7).

Helen Tiffin and Stephen Slemon even while being cautious about ‘Theory’ with its erstwhile European connotations go on to say:

... and yet, for all that, ‘theory’ remains a potentially enabling mechanism for furthering the continuing practice of post-colonial critical resistance into new vectors (Moody 114).

In Midnight’s Children, Rushdie has sought to subvert the so-called ‘official’ history by fictionally fusing the narrative of the protagonist Salim Sinai with the received history of the sub-continent. Salim was born in Bombay in Doctor Narlikar’s Nursing Home on 15 August 1947, the day
India became independent. He was born precisely on the stroke of midnight:

Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, Spell it out: at the precise instant of India’s arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world (4).

In Freedom at Midnight, Collins recounts graphically the last Viceroy’s last press conference, which was only the second time in British history that a viceroy gave a press-conference in India. At the end of it, an anonymous journalist asked him if he would reveal the date he had in mind for the transfer of power. As he had come unprepared for the present question, he gave a date on his own initiative at the spur of the moment - 15 August 1947:

It was a date linked in his memory to the most triumphant hours of his own existence, the day in which his long crusade through the jungles of Burma had ended with the unconditional surrender of the Japanese Empire. What more appropriate date for the birth of the new democratic Asia than the second anniversary of Japan’s surrender? (165).

However Mountbatten’s choice of the date for India’s independence was received with bafflement and consternation by the astrologers. Writes Collins:
No people in the world were as subservient to their authority and rulings as the Indians. Nowhere did their competence extend into so many domains. Every maharaja, every temple, every village, had one or two astrologers who ruled like little dictators over the community and its inhabitants. Millions of Indians wouldn’t dream of setting out on a trip, receiving a guest, signing a contract, going hunting, putting on a new suit, buying a new jewel, cutting a moustache, marrying a daughter or even having their own funerals arranged without prior consultation with an astrologer (166).

And according to Samin Madamanand, a noted astrologer of Calcutta, 15 August was a most inauspicious day, “a day cursed by the stars” (Collins 167). As Collins recounts:

India on 15 August would lie under the zodiacal sign of Makara, Capricorn, a sign one of whose particularities was its unrelenting hostility to all centrifugal forces, hence its partition. Far worse, that day would be passed under the influence of Saturn, a notably inauspicious planet, dominated by Rahu, scornfully labelled by astrologers ‘the star with no neck,’ a celestial body whose manifestations were almost wholly malign. From midnight, 14 August throughout 15 August, Saturn, Jupiter and Venus would
all lie in the most accursed site of the heavens, the ninth house of Karamstahn (167). As a result of all these protests it was decided that India would become independent on the stroke of midnight.

Rushdie also makes use of the material from history regarding astrologers in *Midnight’s Children*. As baby Sinai is inching towards birth there is

... discontent in the heavens. Jupiter, Saturn and Venus are in quarrelsome vein; moreover, the three crossed stars are moving into the most ill-favoured house of all. Benarasi astrologers name it fearfully: ‘Karamstan! They enter Karamstan!’ (126).

And as astrologers make frantic pleas for a change of date of India’s liberation, Sinai’s mother relaxes. While Mountbatten laments the lack of trained astrologers on his General Staff, Amina is put to sleep by the ‘caress’ of a ceiling fan. While Jinnah is ridiculing the protests of horoscope-believers, Amina sinks deeper into sleep.

Even as Jawaharlal Nehru commences his ‘tryst with destiny’ speech, Amina is encouraged by midwife Flory to push harder as the baby’s head is emerging and can be seen. Rushdie weaves his fiction dexterously in and out of Nehru’s speech for a very tellingly incongruous effect. The end effect is to trivialize and render grotesque an occasion that demands singular gravity:
The monster in the streets has begun to roar, while in Delhi a wiry man is saying, ‘... At the stroke of the midnight hour, while the world sleeps, India awakens to life and freedom...’ And beneath the roar of the monster there are two more yells, cries, bellows, the howls of children arriving in the world, their unavailing protests mingling with the din of independence which hangs saffron-and-green in the night sky – ‘A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new; when an age ends; and when the soul of a nation long suppressed finds utterance...’ while in a room with saffron-and-green carpet Ahmed Sinai is still clutching a chair when Dr Narlikar enters to inform him: ‘On the stroke of midnight, Sinai brother, your Begum Sahiba gave birth to a large, healthy child: a son!’

Yet again there was another bizarre accident even as Nehru was delivering his speech, all because of baby Sinai:

Yes, it was my fault... it was the power of my face. mine and nobody else’s, which caused Ahmed Sinai’s hands to release the chair; which caused the chair to drop, accelerating at thirty-two feet per second, and as Jawaharlal Nehru told the Assembly Hall, ‘We end today a period of ill-fortune,’ as conch-shells
blared out the news of freedom, it was on my account that my father cried out too, because the falling chair shattered his toe (Midnight’s Children 134–135).

Rushdie, through Sinai, is fully conscious that what he dishes out in Midnight’s Children is only his version of history. 15 August 1947 may be the most important date in Salim Sinai’s life, but in the general Indian notion of history, 15 August 1947 ... is no more than one fleeting instant in the Age of Darkness, Kali Yuga, in which the cow of mortality has been reduced to standing, teeteringly, on a single leg! (233).

If Rushdie’s Saleem Sinai was born on 15 August 1947, the day of Indian independence, Tharoor’s Draupadi Mokrasi was born on India’s Republic Day. On 26 January 1950, Georgina Drewpad, India’s last vicerine, gave birth to a premature, illegitimate child. There are also other close parallels between Midnight’s Children and the GIN where the novelists strive to weave in their narrative fabric into the fascinating but imposing strands of history, often subverting the official version. The covertly political act of historicization is often laid threadbare in a post-colonial refunctioning of history. In Midnight’s Children, even such a trivial act of the boatman Tai summoning Dr. Adam Aziz, the protagonist’s
grandfather, to make a professional call on the supposedly sick daughter of the landowner Ghani, is something that "is about to set history in motion" (7), for only then can Saleem Sinai be born on the stroke of midnight of 15 August 1947, a historically significant day. By the sheer coincidence of his birth, fortunately or not, at such a momentous hour in Indian history, Saleem Sinai becomes an unwilling prisoner of history. In his own words:

... thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country. For the next three decades, there was to be no escape (3).

Gandhi and his passive resistance is very much topical in Rushdie’s work. In Amritsar, Adam Aziz notes:

Leaflet newspaper mosque and wall are crying: Hartal! Which is to say, literally speaking, a day of mourning, of stillness, of silence. But this is India in the heyday of the Mahatma, when even language obeys the instructions of Gandhiji, and the word has acquired, under his influence, new resonances. Hartal - April 7, agree mosque newspaper wall and pamphlet, because Gandhi has decreed that the whole of India shall, on that day, come to a halt. To mourn in
peace, the continuing presence of the British (Midnight’s Children 32).

Again, even as the protagonist’s grandfather is advising his wife to “Forget about being a good Kashmiri girl [and]... start thinking about being a modern Indian woman” (33), Brigadier R. E. Dyer is waxing his moustache at the British Army Headquarters in the Cantonment area. Thus Rushdie subtly manoeuvres the Jallianwala Bagh massacre into his work. Adam Aziz happens to be there even as Dyer’s men execute his commands. Aziz is saved by an incongruous accident:

As the fifty-one men march down the alleyway a tickle replaces the itch in my grandfather’s nose. The fifty-one men enter the compound and take up positions, twenty-five to Dyer’s right and twenty-five to his left; and Adam Aziz ceases to concentrate on the events around him as the tickle mounts to unbearable intensities. As Brigadier Dyer issues a command the sneeze hits my grandfather full in the face. ‘Yaaaakh-thoooo!’ he sneezes and falls forward, losing his balance, following his nose and thereby saving his life (Midnight’s Children 35).

It is evident that Rushdie’s Jallianwala Bagh massacre closely follows the actual historic event which took place on 13 April 1919. According to the Hunter Report, Brigadier-General Reginald Edward Henry Dyer, on entering the Bagh
stationed twenty-five troops on one side of the higher ground at the entrance and twenty-five troops on the other side. Without giving the crowd any warning to disperse, which he considered unnecessary as they were in breach of his proclamation, he ordered his troops to fire and the firing continued for about ten minutes (Fischer 231).

According to the Hunter Report, which may be viewed as colonially slanted, 1650 rounds were fired by the troops, of which 1516 found their target, 379 fatally (Fischer 232). And Dyer thought that he “would be doing a jolly lot of good...” (Fischer 234).

Rushdie also seems to have followed the Hunter Report closely, for after the massacre,

Brigadier’s Dyer’s fifty men put down their machine-guns and go away. They have fired a total of one thousand six hundred and fifty rounds into the unarmed crowd. Of these, one thousand five hundred and sixteen have found their mark, killing or wounding some person.

In this case also Dyer’s remark after the act is similar: “Good shooting... We have done a jolly good thing” (Midnight’s Children 35).

At Tharoor’s Bibigah Gardens, Colonel Rudyard’s soldiers fired at the innocent unarmed crowd. However, the number of
bullets used for the massacre is slightly lesser than recorded in the Hunter Report, but the figures for the injured and dead remain the same. It may be argued that Tharoor makes this change for better effect:

Just 1600 bullets into the unarmed throng, and when they had finished, oh, perhaps ten minutes later, 379 people lay dead, Ganapathi, and 1,137 lay injured, many grotesquely maimed. When Rudyard was given the figures later he expressed satisfaction with his men. "Only 84 bullets wasted,' he said. 'Not bad' (GIN 81).

Tharoor like Rushdie is sharply critical of Dyer’s brutality, and the colonial insensitivity towards the ‘native’ victimization. As Ved Vyas puts it:

Even those figures were, of course, British ones; in the eyes of many of us the real toll could never be known, for in the telling many more bled their lives into the ground than the British and the press and the official Commission of Inquiry even acknowledged. Who knows, Ganapathi, perhaps each of Rudyard’s bullets sent more than one soul to another world, just as they did the Raj’s claims to justice and decency (GIN 81).

As Midnight’s Children progresses, Saleem Sinai becomes increasingly paranoidal with his suspicion that the Indo-Pak
war of 1965 was a plot meant to annihilate his family. Rushdie's penchant for superimposing his fictional progress on historically significant dates gathers momentum. On 15 December 1971, when Tiger Niazi surrendered to General Sam Manekshaw, Saleem Sinai in his turn "... surrendered to the embraces of a girl with eyes like saucers" (447). To cite another instance, Naseem Ghani, Saleem's grandmother, developed a "longed for" headache on the day the World War ended (24-25). Also, the paranoidal Saleem Sinai says:

Perhaps, if ten million had not walked across the frontiers into India, obliging the Delhi Government to spend $200,000,000 a month on refugee camps—the entire war of 1965, whose secret purpose had been the annihilation of my family, had cost them only $70,000,000! — Indian soldiers, led by General Sam, would never have crossed the frontiers in the opposite direction (447).

Once again the birth of a child and a historic date is made to coincide in Midnight's Children. Saleem Sinai's son Parvati-the-witch who is now called Laylah Sinai enters labour at 2 p.m. on 12 June 1971 precisely when Judge Jag Mohan Lal Sinha of the Allahabad High Court pronounced Prime Minister Indira Gandhi guilty of campaign malpractice during the election of 1971. As before, history is wedded with incongruity in Rushdie's narration:
The labour of Parvati-Laylah lasted for thirteen days. On the first day, while the Prime Minister was refusing to resign, although her convictions carried with them a mandatory penalty barring her from public office for six years, the cervix of Parvati-the-witch, despite contractions as painful as mule-kicks, obstinately refused to dilate... (497).

On the second day, Parvati’s agony becomes more acute even as Mrs. Gandhi’s electoral candidates are defeated by the Janata Morcha in Gujarat. Rushdie jumps straight to the ninth day of Parvati’s labour when Morarji Desai petitions the President to sack Mrs. Gandhi while Parvati-Laylah whimpered in pain “...as the contractions piled upon her like mountains, and she sounded as though she were calling to us down a long hollow tunnel of pain...” (498).

On the twelfth day, Saleem Sinai who was almost dead of starvation waited for Parvati’s delivery while the Supreme Court clarified that Mrs. Gandhi need not resign until her appeal but must neither vote in the lower house or draw her salary. Continues Saleem Sinai:

... and while the Prime Minister in her exultation at this partial victory began to abuse her opponents in language of which a Koli housewife would have been proud, my Parvati’s labour entered a phase in which despite her utter exhaustion she found the energy to
issue a string of foul-smelling oaths from her colour-drained lips... (Midnight’s Children 498-499).

In the evening of the thirteenth day while Parvati was in the throes of childbirth in the ghetto, J.P. Narayan and Morarji Desai were urging the Prime Minister to resign. The leaders of the Janata Morcha were exhorting the police and the Army to disobey the illegal orders of Mrs. Gandhi. Says the narrator:

... in a sense they were forcing Mrs. Gandhi to push, and as the night darkened towards the midnight hour, because nothing ever happens at any other time...

Parvati’s baby was born, even as, elsewhere “... the Prime Minister was giving birth to a child of her own...” – the Emergency. Morarji Desai and J.P. Narayan are arrested along with “... anyone who had ever made the mistake of sneezing during the Madam’s speeches...” (Midnight’s Children 499).

Like Tharoor, who has handled Mrs. Gandhi’s Emergency in the GIN, Rushdie is also dead against it:

... at exactly the same moment, the word Emergency was being heard for the first time, and suspension-of-civil rights, and censorship-of-the-press, and armoured-units-on-special-alert, and arrest of subversive-elements: something was ending, something was being born, and at the precise instant of the
birth of the new India and the beginning of a continuous midnight which would not end for two long years, my son, the child of the renewed tick tock, came out into the world (Midnight's Children 499-500).

The brutality of late Sanjay Gandhi's "civic beautification programme" is presented vividly by Rushdie, but not before giving a capsule description of the Gandhis (not M.K. Gandhi). The systematic disinformation campaign of the government is vividly recounted. Rushdie admits that like Mrs. Gandhi's hair-style which had a white and a black part, the emergency also had its good points and its bad ones, though the former was often exaggerated and the latter suppressed:

All sorts of things happen during an Emergency: trains run on time, black-money hoarders are frightened into paying taxes, even the weather is brought to heel, and bumper harvests are reaped; there is, I repeat, a white part as well as a black. But in the black part, I sat bar-fettered in a tiny room, on a straw palliase which was the only article of furniture I was permitted, sharing my daily bowl of rice with cockroaches and ants... The walls of my cell (paper-thin, peeling-plastered, bare) began to whisper, into one bad ear and one good ear the consequences of my shameful confessions. A cumber-
nosed prisoner, festooned with iron rods and rings which made various natural functions impossible - walking, using the tin chamber-pot, squatting, sleeping - lay huddled against peeling plaster and whispered to the wall (Midnight’s Children 517).

The narrator Sinai is averse to politics in the ordinarily perceived sense of the term but reaches a fatalistic conclusion to the problem of tackling it:

Politics, children: at the best of times a bad dirty business. We should have avoided it... I am coming to the conclusion that privacy, the small individual lives of men, are preferable to all this inflated macrocosmic activity. But too late. Can’t be helped. What can’t be cured must be endured (Midnight’s Children 518).

Though Tharoor has also dealt with the Emergency in the GIN, there has arguably never been a fiercer indictment of it such as we encounter in Midnight’s Children. Saleem Sinai along with the other children of midnight were forcibly sterilized during the Emergency. Says the narrator:

They were good doctors: they left nothing to chance. Not for us the simple vas - and tubectomies performed on the teeming masses: because there was a chance, just a chance that such operations could be reversed... ectomies were performed, but
irreversibly: testicles were removed from sacs, and wombs vanished forever (523).

Like Tharoor, Rushdie also takes up the end of the Emergency and the rather disappointing experiment the rule of the Janata Party turned out to be. Morarji Desai gets rough treatment from both. After Mrs. Gandhi called a general election to the surprise of most observers, and her subsequent rout in the elections,

... the nation had been placed in the custody of an ancient dotard who ate pistachios and cashews and daily took a glass of ‘his own water.’ Urine-drinkers had come to power. The Janata Party, with one of its own leaders trapped in a kidney-machine...

seemed quite disgusting to the narrator and he declares that he has had enough of politics (525).

In *Midnight’s Children*, Rushdie plays not only with history, but with the concept of time. Thus, according to the narrator’s own admission, the Emergency is presented as a six-hundred-and-thirty-five-day-long midnight which is in itself “perhaps excessively romantic” (529).

In Ron Shepherd’s reading of *Midnight’s Children*, the “logic” or “coherence” of Saleem’s narrative closely resembles a dream. He suggests that Aadam Aziz and his wife are slightly larger than life characters while Wee Willie Winkie and Joe D’Costa appears somewhat diminished. He also feels that at
least in one sense the novel is highly political even though the political figures in it (Indira Gandhi, Sanjay, Morarji Desai, and so on) appear to be "... monsters straight out of nightmare (which, in one sense, is deliberately hyperbole)."

As the novel proceeds Saleem is moving towards disintegration: "... he loses finger, hair, sense of smell, memory, and ends impotent as a result of the forced sterilization programme during the Emergency" (40).

As Rushdie himself admits, *Shame* is an "overtly political" novel. According to O.P. Mathur: "The novel shows the manifestation of the dictatorship syndrome, but with the fictional strategy of caricature and irony" (88). Much as Rushdie may deny it, *Shame* depicts Pakistan in camouflage. In just the same manner in which Aadam Aziz saw his future wife through the restrictive hole on a perforated sheet, Pakistan is there in *Shame*, visible in fragments. Remarks Mathur:

... the country of *Shame*, with its many landmarks like "Q" (Quetta), "K" (Karachi) which includes a Defence Colony, and the new capital (Islamabad) is unmistakably Pakistan. Some of the characters have close parallels in history — President Shaggy Dog (Yahya Khan), Iskander Harappa (Zulfikar Ali Bhutto), Rani Humayun (Begum Nusrat Bhutto), Arjumand Harappa (Benazir Bhutto) and Raza Hyder (Zia ul-Haq). Among the important historical events which find a place in
the novel are the overthrow of Ayub Khan, the General Elections in Pakistan, the Bangladesh War, Bhutto’s rise and fall, Zia ul-Haq’s rise to power (and imagined fall!), the Russian army’s moving into Afghanistan, suppression of Frontier tribals, etc. Field Marshal Mohammad A. (Ayub) rubs shoulders with Raza Hyder (Zia ul-Haq) (89).

Rushdie makes it clear that he dislikes Pakistan. Though he seems to be ashamed of the flawed idea of Pakistan, he seems to like Bangladesh. In Mathur’s words:

While the novelist’s ironies are all directed at Pakistan and its rulers, past and present, he has a sympathy for Bangladesh, not only because it was born in protest against the disregard of the popular vote, but also because by ‘seceding from the secessionist’ it has paid them back in their own coin (90-91).

Historical events dominate the canvas of both Midnight’s Children and Shame just as the communal hatred in the Punjab is highlighted in Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan. As Tariq Rahman suggests: “In Rushdie’s fiction... bits of real history are presented but they are made to appear as integral parts of the narrator’s consciousness” (105). In both Midnight’s Children and Shame, the politics of the subcontinent is viewed with disapproval:
The narrator reveals himself as detached, disinterested and intelligent. He is unprejudiced and his views of politics is neither Indian nor Pakistani. He reacts to events from a purely human point of view. In this regard he transcends nationality, race, creed and even cultural upbringing... (Rahman 105).

The fusion of fiction with history had earlier been attempted by such writers as Mulk Raj Anand and Manohar Malgonkar, to name only two examples. In Anand’s novels, historical personages like Gandhi, Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel are introduced. Political events are also skilfully foregrounded. In *Untouchable* and *The Sword and the Sickle*, Gandhi appears in person (Cowasjee 20). But what is to be remembered is the fact that even though Anand speaks irreverentially about the Mahatma at times, thanks to his leftist leanings, the overall tone is that of reverence and seriousness, while Rushdie’s and Tharoor’s is diametrically opposite. In Anand’s *Private Life of an Indian Prince*, Patel is presented with all his bullying style.

Of late, Ganapathi has become the favourite of many post-colonial writers, especially Rushdie and Tharoor. In the *Mahabharata*, after conceiving the epic, Vyasa underwent meditations and requested Brahma for an amanuensis. On Brahma’s advice, Vyasa meditated yet again invoking Ganapathi
who appeared before him. He agreed to write the story of the Mahabharata on the condition that the dictation should be done without a pause. Ved Vyas agreed, but only after stipulating that nothing should be written without first comprehending it (Mahabharata 17).

In the GIN, Brahm who runs the Apsara Agency sends Ganapathi, a long-nosed South Indian to act as amanuensis for the retired politician Ved Vyas. Tharoor’s Ganapathi has an “elephantine tread” and broad forehead. He comes back in the afternoon, Ved Vyas having agreed to his condition of dictating the story without pause, “... dragging his enormous trunk behind him, laden with enough to last him a year... (GIN 18). As in the epic, the scribe agrees to write the story only after understanding every word uttered. And Tharoor’s Ganapathi is made to cope with modern Japanese technology as well, for the wily Ved Vyas has the plan to dictate into a small Japanese tape-recorder whenever Ganapathi went round the corner for a leak. The South Indian Ganapathi is entrusted with the ponderous task of transcribing what Ved Vyas calls the Song of Modern India.

After the initial couple of sentences in which the amanuensis spells out his conditions, Ganapathi is very professional, he hardly utters another sentence. But the narrator constantly reminds the reader of his long-nosed presence through such questions as: “Are you with me so far,
Ganapathi? Got everything?” (35), “Where were we, Ganapathi?” (43), “How shall I tell it, Ganapathi?” (46) and so on. Towards the end of the novel, Ganapathi's eyebrows and nose “twist themselves into an elephantine question-mark” (GIN 418), and Ved Vyas does not fail to note the look of dismay on his face at being told that he was going to retell the story.

In *Midnight's Children*, the central image employed is that of Saleem Sinai's long nose. Sinai who is on the verge of disintegration suffers bouts of identity-crisis. When Padma feels his forehead affectionately he gets further confused:

Am I... merely mortal — or something more? Such as — yes, why not — mammoth-trunked, Ganeshnosed as I am — perhaps, the Elephant. Who, like Sin the moon, controls the waters, bringing the gift of rain... whose mother was Ira, queen consort of Kashyap, the old Tortoise Man, lord and progenitor of all creatures on the earth... the Elephant who is also the rainbow, and lightning, and whose symbolic value, it must be added, is highly problematic and unclear.

Saleem Sinai considers himself “elusive as rainbows, unpredictable as lightning,” and as “garrulous as Ganesh...” (234). In fact, Saleem inherited his nose from his grandfather Dr. Aadam Aziz, whose nose is also comparable to the trunk of Ganesh. Its bridge was so wide that “You could cross a river on that nose” (8).
The narrator is truly grateful for having inherited his nose, otherwise nobody would have believed him to be his grandfather’s grandson. However, the boatman Tai’s praise for Aziz’s nose is commingled with both grandeur and filthiness characteristic of post-colonialism:

That’s a nose to start a family on, my princeling. There’d be no mistaking whose brood they were. Mughal Emperors would have given their right hands for noses like that one. There are dynasties waiting inside it... like snot (8).

For Tai, for whom the nose is a “place where the outside world meets the world inside you,” Sinai’s nose is “a great gift.” He advises him: “Follow your nose and you’ll go far” (Midnight’s Children 13).

Saleem Sinai was born only because his grandfather’s inordinately long nose saved him just when Brigadier Dyer’s soldiers fired at the unarmed crowd because the nose, feeling irritated, had flung Aadam Aziz into a life-saving sneeze. It is important to note that the nose is shown almost as if it had a will of its own and an identity that was distinct. Sometimes even the very lives of both Aziz and grandson Sinai are seen to be controlled by this inherited abnormal-sized organ.

Again, it was Saleem Sinai’s nose which let him down when he was unwittingly engaged in his act of voyeurism inside the
white wooden washing-chest watching his mother's duplicity besides her nakedness. For the nine-year-old Sinai it is a "world-altering" let-down:

... the nose of Saleem Sinai, responding to the evidence of maternal duplicity, quivering at the presence of maternal rump, gave way to a pajama-cord and was possessed by a cataclysmic - a world-altering - an irreversible sniff. Pyjama-cord rises painfully half an inch further up the nostril. But other things are rising, too: hauled by that feverish inhalation, nasal liquids are being sucked relentlessly up up up, nose-goo flowing upwards, against gravity, against nature. Sinuses are subjected to unbearable pressure... until, inside the nearly nine year old head something bursts. Snot rockets through a breached dam into dark channels. Mucus, rising higher than mucus was ever intended to rise. Waste fluid, reaching as far, perhaps, as the frontiers of the brain... (Midnight’s Children 191).

This celebration of filth is characteristic of post-colonial fiction, from Rushdie even to a writer who emerged as lately as Arundhati Roy.

Even Sinai’s nose is connected to the fortunes of his country. It was exactly when the Indo-China war was at its peak that personal misfortune struck Sinai in the form of
nose-goo that accidentally smeared his father’s bush-shirt when he smothered his son in an embrace of affection. Consequently, he was taken to an Ear Nose Throat Clinic and drained of all the excess nasal stuff which ultimately robbed him of his “nose-given telepathy...” (Midnight’s Children 364).

Saleem Sinai’s wife Parvati gave birth to a child who was really Major Shiva’s illegitimate offspring. Sinai was father to the child only for appearance’s sake. However the baby, through his exemplary behaviour, “... his absolute refusal to cry or whimper utterly won over his adoptive father...” (501). Parvati’s child, naturally, did not inherit Sinai’s Ganesh-nose. However, he had abnormally big ears, and in that respect resembled Ganapathi, the offspring of Lord Shiva and Parvati: “... elephantiasis attacked him in the ears instead of the nose - because he was also the true son of Shiva-and-Parvati; he was elephant-headed Ganesh...” (Midnight’s Children 500). Thus we can see that for fictional purposes Ganapathi has become very popular with post-colonial writers especially Indian English novelists.

According to Tiffin, early post-colonial writers were compelled to search for an “alternative authenticity” which itself was endorsed by the centre to which they did not belong and yet was continually contradicted by the everyday experience of marginality (41). Referring to colonial
practices, Paulus Pimomo points to the weaknesses of other theorists, especially Trotter. Pimomo goes on:

Among the things they (the colonizer) thought they did were extending the ‘light’ of civilization to the ‘dark’ corners of the world, replacing the age of brutality with the age of philanthropy and humanitarianism, exploring the world’s natural resources for Western capitalism, responding to the call of adventure and of god, and so forth. Whatever the Englishman thought of himself at home, once he got to the colonies, he did not think of turning himself into his opposite or of re-barbarising himself. He played several roles, but none of them contemplated self-obliteration as a goal. As an imperial functionary, he always conducted himself as a man having natural authority over the natives (45).

Jenny Sharpe views the “mimic man” or “colonial subject” as “a contradictory figure who simultaneously reinforces colonial authority and disturbs it” (140). She argues that the so-called civilizing mission of the British in India was aimed at creating a native middle-class equipped with European tastes and values. T.B. Macaulay’s 1835 “Minute on Indian Education” is seen as one of the earliest articulations of the civilizing project. As the President of the Committee on Public Instruction, Macaulay announced:
We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect (141).

In a later speech delivered at the British House of Commons on 10 July 1833, Macaulay winds up his defence of the activities of the East India Company and the civilizing mission saying: "To trade with civilised men is definitely more profitable than to govern savages" (Sharpe 142). Thus we can see that the dominant leitmotif of the colonialist enterprise is that of economic exploitation of the colonized. Sharpe envisages Rammohun Roy as the archetypal mimic man.

In Caribbean Discourse, Edouard Glissant writes about the futile nature of Europe’s civilizing mission and the urge of the natives to mimic the colonizer. As Shalini Puri puts it:

...the colonized society lives a contradiction: on one hand it must be a slave to Europe, exploited to maintain Europe’s privilege at its own expense; on the other hand, it is required to identify with Europe, to become Europe. Thus it is asked to be, simultaneously, Prospero and Caliban. Given this grounding contradiction, Glissant argues that the imitative project is bound to fail (95).
This literary mimesis is seen as a colonial mode of representation. Further, in Glissant’s view, formal features of literary realism such as “clarity” of a linear narrative and the omniscient authority of “objectivity” are seen as mechanisms of othering (Puri 96). Therefore, he makes a strong plea for a new poetics that is liberated from such hampering structures. According to David Trotter, critics like Homi Bhabha, Abdul Jan Mohammed and Gayatri Spivak would like to view colonialism as “a ‘discourse,’ a ‘signifying system,’ a text without an author” (3).

Madhava Prasad, in his critique of post-colonial discourse, examines the writings of Edward Said on post-coloniality, Benita Parry’s “Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse” and Abdul Jan Mohamed’s Manichean Aesthetics. In Prasad’s reading, the starting point of the anti-colonial discourse of both Fanon and Jan Mohamed is the former’s idea of Manicheism which he thought dominated colonial discourse. Fanon’s conception of the space of colonial politics and culture is in terms of binary axes which was used as the ideological weapon of the colonizer. Accordingly, in his anti-colonial struggle Fanon desired a reversal of the terms of the binary for in his view, “Decolonisation is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature” (Prasad 74).
For Edward Said, the Orient was an invention of the Europeans (1). As he puts it:

The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles (2).

Said stresses that Orientalism should be examined as a discourse in terms of Foucaultian notion of discourse in order to understand "the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage - and even produce - the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period" (Orientalism 3).

Until the end of World War II when America started to dominate world affairs, the role of Britain and France and therefore their involvement in the Orient was considerable. So Said says:

To speak of Orientalism therefore is to speak mainly, although not exclusively, of a British and French cultural enterprise, a project whose dimensions take in such disparate realms as the imagination itself, the whole of India and the
Levant, the Biblical texts and the Biblical lands, the spice trade, colonial armies and a long tradition of colonial administrators, a formidable scholarly corpus, innumerable Oriental 'experts' and 'hands,' an Oriental professorate, a complex array of 'Oriental' ideas (Oriental despotism, Oriental splendor, cruelty, sensuality), many Eastern sects, philosophies, and wisdoms domesticated for local European use - the list can be extended more or less indefinitely (Orientalism 4).

Said views Orientalism as only a crafty structure of lies and myths which truth would easily demolish. But one has to be on the guard while dealing with such an organized discourse such as Orientalism:

After all, any system of ideas that can remain unchanged as teachable wisdom (in academies, books, congresses, universities, foreign-service institutes) from the period Ernest Renan in the late 1840s until the present in the United States must be something more formidable than a mere collection of lies. Therefore, says Said, Orientalism, far from being "an airy European fantasy" about the East, was a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment. Continued investment made
Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness... (Orientalism 6).

Finally, before winding up any discussion of postmodernism, or for that matter post-colonialism, the contemporary practice of using inter-art discourse in fiction merits a brief mention. The use of inter-art discourse has come to be regarded as one of the most favourite and effective literary practices of both postmodern and post-colonial fiction. A tendency to represent novelistic discourse in cinematic terms is the most frequently observed praxis. Tharoor, who has incidentally resorted to cinematic discourse to a far greater extent in his novel Show Business, also talks in terms of shooting script terminology in certain parts of the GIN. The depiction of these scenes is in such a manner as to evoke in the reader’s mind a Bollywood-type visual imagery, albeit subversively. In Chapter 43, when Bhim loses consciousness after consuming the poisoned food offered by Priya Duryodhani, she tiptoes to him and throws him into the river. Immediately, Ved Vyás engages his long-nosed scribe with his cinematic jargon:

Imagine it, Ganapathi, as a silent film of the 1920s. There stands Priya Duryodhani... She looks around with a rapidity only the celluloid of the era can record, to ensure that no one has seen her.
Satisfied – imagine the close-up, Ganapathi, at that firmly set mouth, those grim lips, that determined face with its blazing eyes... (154).

Bhim having sunk, with the poison working inside him, it looks unlikely that he will ever resurface again alive. "'A job well done!' the titles would say on the screen. Fade and dissolve, to Duryodhani returning to join the others..." (GIN 155).

Though a Bollywood type visual imagery is evoked in the reader’s mind, it is important to note the playful, almost trivial tone, which the writer employs seemingly carelessly in order to heighten the play of parody of the text on modes of representation peculiar to the Indian film industry. Tharoor’s depiction (in Chapter 5) of Ganga outwitting the Raja of Saubal is clearly filmic in style. The former making off with the princesses in his "stately Rolls" is chased by Salva in his customized Hispano-Suiza. The Raja forced Ganga’s car to a stop and leapt out. As Ved Vyas narrates it:

Then it all happened very suddenly. No one heard anything above the screeching of tyres, but Ganga’s hand appeared briefly through a half-open window and Salva staggered back, his Hispano-Suiza collapsing beneath him as the air whooshed out of its tyres. The Rolls drove quietly off, engine purring...
complacently as the Raja of Saubal shook an impotent fist at its retreating end (GIN 27).

Again, the tear-stained face of Amba, rebuffed by Saubal, gazing through the bars of a carriage-window as the train rushes to Hastinapur reminds us of so many heroines and scenes we have seen in Bollywood movies. Equally cinematic in presentation is the one in which she runs out of Ganga’s room having failed to persuade him to marry her (29). Equally in Bollywood-style is the scene in which Karna is exposed to be merely a chauffeur’s son (GIN 138-139).

Tharoor’s Show Business is a full-length parody of the Bollywood cinema which makes effective use of inter-art discourse. Being divided into six sections, each section is itself titled Take One, Take Two, and so on, using shooting parlance. The story of Bollywood superstar Ashok Banjara, the novel opens on the sets of a Bollywood movie with him chasing the temperamental and ageing heroine Abha. As the shooting progresses, the refrain “Lights! Camera! Action!” is heard time and again. In between, Ashok Banjara and Abha have to do a lot of lip-synching as the scene being shot was that of a film-song. In Banjara’s words:

The playback song starts again, I lip-synch my melodic vow of eternal pursuit, the rain falls through holed buckets, my feet move as they have been taught, but I am terrified they will trip over
each other. I am actually aware of the ridiculousness of what I am doing, even more aware of the incompetence with what I am doing it. Double embarrassment here, to be doing the ridiculous incompetently. I am so petrified with fear of failure that I do not sense the tickle in my nose until I reach for Abha in mid-cavort, my back impossibly bent in choreographical adulation, one hand behind my rump like a bureaucrat seeking a discreet bribe, the other stretching up to her chin, lips moving to the playback lyric. I am hardly aware of it as I look into her eyes, my nostrils flaring in desire, and sneeze.

‘Cut!’ (9).

Abha’s greatest asset was considered to be her firm and formidable breasts which were also rated as fantasy material for over a million of her admirers. However, the young debutant hero Banjaraa got the shock of his life when her real-life breasts were revealed to be unbelievably “shrivelled and empty” as she had only been fooling her fans with “a pair of falsies” (20). Again, in the chapter entitled “Godambo,” Ashok Banjara is shown engaged in a terrible fight with the arch-villain’s agent on an aeroplane. The story is revealed to the reader as he would see it through the eyes of a camera. The continued use of the simple present tense in terse
sentences and shooting-script terminology like 'Interior' and 'Exterior' heighten the illusion of a Bollywood movie being created scene by scene amidst the highly humorous practical difficulties encountered. Equally parodic in nature is the "Note" which appears by way of conclusion to the chapter "Godambo":

(Note: this is an abbreviated version of the story. For reasons of space and stamina, we have omitted one puja, two tearful scenes before Ashok's father's photograph, an entire comic sub-plot featuring a domestic servant in a Gandhi cap and a fat woman in a nightdress, and four songs.) (Show business 49).

Rushdie has also made use of inter-art discourse in *Midnight's Children*. To cite just one instance, after a description of Amritsar replete with scatological imagery, Rushdie enters straightaway into movie-jargon:

Close-up of my grandfather's right hand: nail knuckles fingers all somehow bigger than you'd expect. Clumps of red hair on the outside edges. Thumb and forefinger pressed together, separated only by a thickness of paper... (we cut to a long shot...)

(Midnight's Children 31).

Again on page 34 is given another shooting-script notation: "(No close-up is necessary)." Thus we can see that inter-art discourse has been employed by post-colonial fiction-writers
like Tharoor and Rushdie quite effectively, often blurring the boundaries of both movie and novelistic discourse into a highly pleasurable and expressive mode of representation.

Before bringing down the curtain to this chapter, it will be worthwhile to briefly look at Ernst Toller’s view of history as “the propaganda of the victors,” in which case it will follow that the resultant product of the act of historicization will become official history itself which in turn will constitute only a string of half-truths or what is left after the displacement of the things excluded. Thus, writing history, whether colonial or post-colonial will include the politics of selection and exclusion of events, centralizing or peripheralizing the self and the other depending on the political equation contemporaneous at the moment of the act of historicization. Consequently, it may be argued that historicization is necessarily a political process. It is perhaps the politics of the post-colonial writer to disagree with official history and endeavour to rewrite it in his own terms as Rushdie has done in Midnight’s Children and Shame, and Tharoor in the GIN. The linear progression of official historical narrative is violently subverted by Rushdie, Tharoor being more merciful in this respect.
The politics of post-colonial fiction, it must be added, involves the use or, in the eyes of those unused to it or with vested interests, 'abuse' of language. Norms of usage are routinely inverted and mixed with disproportionate entities in a process of post-colonial "chutnification."