



Chapter One
Historiography and Revisionist Fiction :
The Narrative Quest/ion

I

There is a keen inter-relationship between history and the writing of fiction. In fact, the early beginning of writing history had its origin in the form of 'story'. Perhaps it was not a coincidence when Herodotus, the father of Greek history, had started writing history as 'stories'. This shows that there is definitely an inherent affinity in the writing of both history as well as fiction. Irving H. Buchen aptly remarks : "[T]he reason history is a natural ally of the novel is that both are unfinished.... they not only mutually sustain each other, but also...are inevitably reciprocal : the novel records the form of history and the history of form" (98). Buchen, therefore, believes that the novel "...as a protean form moves back and forth in time and space and is as progressive, regressive, and recurrent as history is" (96). In other words, Buchen seems to suggest that there is a kind of trafficking between past and present in both the history and the novel.

Furthermore, both deal with words and hence naturally they take resort to narrative frameworks. It is true that history deals with what had actually happened in the past, while fiction overtly deals with imaginary events, with what might probably happen. This was the reason why Aristotle made a valid distinction between a poet and a historian. According to Aristotle, the difference between a historian and a poet lies in the fact that "the former relates things that have happened, but the later things that may happen" (97). Nevertheless this does

not mean that the poet cannot relate the past events. He only presents the past in a more visionary than factual manner. The historicity of the novel, wrote Georg. Lukacs, is shown in its "derivation of the individuality of characters from the historical peculiarities of their age" (qtd. in Howe 1537). In other words, both the historian and the poet deal directly or indirectly with the narratives of past happenings. As far as their vision and approach are concerned, they are widely different, but their treatment of the subject-matter is rooted in the narrative function.

Since Aristotle, several critics have begun serious discussion about the nature of the narrative in both history and fiction. Giving a lucid definition of narrative, Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg remark : "[F]or writing to be narrative no more and no less than a teller and a tale are required" (4). In history, too, one notices that the historian is a teller and the history is a tale. These critics observe that history has to do with the interpretation of the past deeds. At the same time, it is also noticed that there are different versions of the same historical event. For example, the French Revolution has had a number of different chronicles, although certain historical facts have remained similar in their accounts. In other words, historians pattern their narratives on the basis of their historical knowledge, but the moment they do so, their own subjectivity interferes with their treatment. In this sense, no history is purely objective, because subjectivity is bound to enter into its writing. R.G.Collingwood rightly comments on the prevailing ideology of objectivity in history when he says that "history is nothing but the re-enactment of past thought in the historian's mind" (qtd. in Jaus 1552). No two historians, however, have the similar re-enactment of past thought in their minds. In this way, the patterning of the narrative framework differs from one historian to another historian. Consequently,

there are different stories of a given historical fact.

Moreover, the historian does not bring into light all facts, but historicizes only a select group of facts. For this purpose, he selects some and avoids other facts. If he omits those facts with which he is either ignorant or indifferent, then he selects the facts which help him in creating his pattern of narrative flow. By this process he arrives at the finished product of his story - which is history. By historicizing certain selected facts, the historian tries to create his pattern of story; giving them a proper perspective and plot. As E.H.Carr rightly believes that "...it is he (historian) who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context" (11). This clearly indicates that the historian cannot 'totally' grasp the world of facts. He is compelled, therefore, to omit something and select other thing. This is one reason why 'the historian is necessarily selective' (12). But the manner in which the historian selects his historical material informs about his interpretative act. In this respect, according to W.B.Gallie, history resembles imaginative literature, because the historian creates not merely a "coherent picture" but also a "followable narrative" (qtd. in Dhar 52). That is, he does not put forth a mere dead corpus of 'facts', but rather he alters or modifies them in correspondence to his vision and design. By working on his selected materials, he imparts to them a peculiar style and narrative frame.

Sometimes the historian may miss the mark and may misrepresent certain historical facts inadvertently. This happens when he tailors his writing in tacit agreement with a political party or ruling power. In this case, the historian may subscribe to political ideology and may give a false picture of the fact. Such a practice is known, in the phrase of R.G.Collingwood, as 'scissors-and-paste history', the famous examples of which are found in

the Nazi and fascist historians.

Apart from this, there is also another hazard to historiography : the over-emphasis of one group of facts and the under-representation of the other group. Here the historian is likely to create a bad image of a specific historical figure or caste, creed and religion and thereby he may exaggerate his historical narrative. On the other hand, certain other 'facts' may be passed over in silence or ignored with cunning. Here again 'ideology' plays the devious part of which Roland Barthes aptly observes : ".....in the decorative display of what-goes-without-saying, the ideological abuse... is hidden there" (qtd. in Lentricchia 132). But such ideological abuse masked under 'silence' will eventually speak against the historian when the future historians will retrieve those ignored 'voices' from history and give them proper representation.

Perhaps this is the reason why the writing of history has become such an embattled ground of contesting historians who interpret history from their own specific ideologies. For instance, the history of India has been written from diverse points of view and ideologies. The real problematics of history in India started from the time of the British, because several accounts produced then were written from the specific object of justifying the British rule in India. The writers of such histories came to be known as imperial historians. For example, in an essay "Rewriting Indian History" (1963), D.P.Singhal writes elaborately on the nature of British writings on India which suffered from "prejudices based sometimes on personal bias but often on group consciousness" (qtd. in Dhar 81). The imperialistic historians thus have written the history of India with their own bias. Whereas the nationalistic discourse tells a different story about India. The Marxist historians, on the other hand, have rendered yet an-

other version of India and her freedom struggle.

Recently a new group, known as the subaltern group, has emerged in the scenario and their work is known as Subaltern Studies. This particular group emphasizes and insists on the representation of peasants, working-classes and the women who were hitherto ignored by most of the historians. As this group represents the voice of the oppressed, it is better known as the subaltern group. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has clicked a right definition of the subaltern when she said that "the subaltern himself cannot speak" (*Norton* 2202); therefore there is a need for someone who must speak on behalf of the oppressed. The subaltern historian re-visits the site of bygone facts and brings them back in the limelight of the present. According to Spivak, therefore, the subaltern studies deconstructs the official historiography by showing that "what has seemingly been thoroughly successful, namely elite historiography, on the right or the left, nationalist or colonialist, is itself....constituted by cognitive failures" (*In Other Worlds* 199). In the works of Nayantara Sahgal, Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh, such a subaltern historiographic representation is abundantly found in parallel to imperialistic, Gandhian and nationalistic discourses. Qurratulain Hyder and Rohinton Mistry also undertake different versions of the Partition and the Emergency in their novels, but they tend to sympathize with the subaltern view of history. In like manner, historians like Ranjit Guha and Partha Chatterjee expressly lend their support to the subaltern historiography by refuting the so-called established views of Indian history.

Considering such different approaches to history and its writing, the question of course arises : what makes such different versions of history possible notwithstanding different ideologies ? This question has continuously been raised in recent historiographic investigations.

Obviously it is not the facts or chronicles of facts that account for such difference, but it is the narrative of the historiographic representation which is responsible for diversity in the historical writing. The question certainly takes one to a different dimension of the problematic : the question of narrative. In recent debates about the nature of historical representation, more and more attention is paid to the aspects of narrative and the use of language therein. In short, the problematic has to do with the form of narrative discourse in history in much the same way as there are different forms of the narrative in literature in general and in fiction in particular. For example, irony, comedy, tragedy, family saga, allegory, realism, magic realism appear in the writing of literature. In history, too, one finds different tones and undertones akin to these. If there is the process of 'plotting' in fiction, the similar 'plotting' is found in historiography too.

Recently, critics like Paul Ricoeur, Hayden White and Frank Lentricchia confirm the presence of such narrativity in history and therefore they maintain that there is more fictional narrative in history than is commonly assumed. According to White, Paul Ricoeur's book *Time and Narrative* "...has set forth a veritable metaphysics of narrativity and defence of its adequacy, not only to historical representation, but also to the representation of the fundamental "structures of temporality"" (qtd. in Cohen 37).

After the advent of New Historicism in the 1980s, both historians and critics have become alert and sensitive to the question of narrative discourse in the historical knowledge. "If the 1970s could be called the Age of Deconstruction", Joseph Litvak writes, "...late twentieth century criticism might well characterize the 1980s as marking the Return of History, or

perhaps the Recovery of the Referent" (qtd. in Guerin *et al* 247). Likewise Fredric Jameson insists, "Always historicize!" This is a slogan, he believes, "...imperative of all dialectical thought..." (*The Political Unconscious* ix). Like cultural studies, the new historicism concerns itself with extraliterary matters, including letters, diaries, films, paintings, medical treatises, etc. It looks for an opposing tension in a text, then for an opposing tension related in history. In other words, new historicists seek surprising coincidences that may cross generic, historical, and cultural boundaries previously maintained, thereby highlighting unsuspected lending and borrowing of metaphor, ceremony, dance, dress or popular culture. As H. Aram Veesser notes : "it brackets together literature, ethnography, anthropology, art history, and other disciplines and sciences" in such a way that "its politics, its novelty, its historicity, [and] its relationship to other prevailing ideologies is remain open question" (qtd. in Guerin *et al* 248). In short, constant attention to dualism, subversion, dynamism, dialogism - to *relationship* - makes new historicism exciting.

The relationship among the diverse elements of the facts is what constitutes narrative thread. The skeleton of historical facts is obvious enough but this skeleton is embodied by the flesh and blood of 'narrativity' running through it. In other words, what happened at a certain period or point of time in the past does not by itself make that 'event' an historical event until and unless the historian processes it for his own purpose. It means that this 'processing' has to do with the artifact of language and narrative. It is after all the question of 'how' a particular historian brings it to limelight. Here E.H.Carr's observation is worth citing : History consists of a corpus of ascertained facts. The facts are available to the historian in documents, inscription and so on, like fish or the fish-monger's slab. The historian collects them,

takes them home, and cooks, and serves them in whatever style appeals to him (9).

Hayden White's conclusion is doubtless valid when he theorizes about the nature of historical narrative : "[A]ll historical narratives presuppose figurative characterizations of the events they purport to represent and explain. And this means that historical narratives, considered purely as verbal artifacts, can be characterized by the mode of figurative discourse in which they are cast" (*Norton* 1724). White calls this "meta-history" which means to get behind or beneath the presuppositions which sustain a historical inquiry. According to White, the key assumption that has sustained this is the belief that history and literature are the two distinct and diametrically opposed activities. In his view this is the assumption which is shared by practitioners in both disciplines. On the contrary, White argues, because history, like literature, is a verbal structure and the historian, first and foremost is a writer, the tools that have served literary critics, the tools that compose the linguistic and rhetorical structures of a text, serve the historian as well. That is, the language in which history is written cannot be dismissed as "window-dressing" as most historians are tempted to do. Language in history is never merely a means to an end. It is neither transparent nor neutral, nor does it disappear to allow the pure truth of history to emerge. In White's view, historical narratives are thus verbal fictions with invented contexts.

Put in other words, history gains its explanatory power by processing data into "stories". But these stories take their shape from what White calls "emplotment", the process through which the facts are encoded as components of plots. White believes that such plots require ".....the transformation of a chronicle of events into a story..... among the many kinds of plot structures provided by the cultural tradition of the historian" (*Cohen* 27). Interestingly,

these plots are not available in the events themselves, but they exist in the minds of historians. No historical event can constitute a story by itself - either tragic or ironic. Nevertheless, it can be presented as such from the use of the historian's emplotment. Through this the event emerges as the 'plotted' story which takes on meaning when it is combined with other elements.

Following Northrop Frye's archetypal analysis, White identifies four possible emplotments : tragic, comic, romantic and ironic. White explains that different historians use these dominant figurative modes of language to describe events. In order to give such emplotments, they use four master tropes or modes of figurative representation - metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony - which correspond to the four types of emplotment. In this way, in giving answer to the raised question of difference in historical versions, White concludes that these emplotments account for their differences. For example, the differences among the contending histories of the French Revolution cannot be resolved by facts alone, because the facts or the relationships among them do not lie in the events themselves, but they are construed by historians in their linguistic and literary structures. In that sense tropes, like plots, are ineradicable from historical discourse. In the final analysis, according to White, history evokes reality : it does not reproduce or represent it.

Despite some objections raised by the poststructuralist critics about his structuralist reductionism, White has successfully dismantled the opposition between history and literature. He has paved the way for several productive studies in both fields. Because of White's influence, historians and literary critics no longer believe that history gives its readers a privileged access to the real or the truth. Consequently, they have now turned to investigate the

grounds of history as well as its linkages to other fields of knowledge including literature.

As fictional narrative is found in historical writing, so, too, historical narrative can be seen in the text of prose fiction. Not all novels, however, deal with such historical facts, but nevertheless they touch the realm of history either directly or indirectly. Even when there is found little reference to historical realities, still some covert historical text lies embedded in the narrative of the novel. But when it directly or consciously describes the narrative of historical facts, then it is said to belong to the genre of the historical novel.

In the nineteenth century the historical novel came into prominence after the influence of Sir Walter Scott. Commenting on the socio-historical importance of the historical novel, the Hungarian philosopher Georg Lukacs says that "...the historical novel in its origin, development, rise and decline follows inevitably upon the great social transformations of modern times" (17). This genre would take the real historical figures and the real events of history as the basis of its narrative framework. The practice of Scott and his imitators made it an important adjunct to the study of history. The vogue of the historical novel made critics to analyse and characterize its nature and function. Several critics have tried to define its scope and potentialities. Giving the definition of the historical novel, John Buchan says that "an historical novel is simply a novel which attempts to reconstruct the life and recapture the atmosphere of an age other than those of the writer" (qtd. in Goodman 468). Now all critics agree that the historical novel is an imaginative reconstruction of the past. In such a novel, the historic setting of a bygone age was perfectly described – its dress, manners, customs and so on. The historical novelist would try to give a vivid picture of the life and times of the past age. Scott gave a faithful picture of the Elizabethan age in *Kenilworth* where actual personalities

like Queen Elizabeth and Sir Walter Raleigh are portrayed in black and white. Charles Dickens also gave a brilliant picture of the French Revolution in his novel – *A Tale of Two Cities*.

The fidelity to minute details, however, was not observed in the historical novel. Scott mixed Elizabethan age with the medieval history of Europe. At times anachronism was also found in the chronology and disposal of events. What was lacking in this kind of novel was the exact representation of the past culture and the way people thought and felt. Although the outward social setting might be in good order, yet it was very difficult to show the inner life of the bygone age. For the sake of avoiding any controversy, the novelist would write, as he still does, that "any resemblances or similarities between the story and the real lives of any person living or dead are purely unintended and co-incidental."

Despite this disclaimer, there is often seen the presence of trans-world-identical characters in several realistic historical novels. As Brian Mchale illumines, "...the presence of historical characters in historical novels is itself only a special case of the universal structure of literary reference whereby an internal (fictional) field of reference and an external (real-world) field overlap and interpenetrate" (86). In spite of this fact, the writer would have to adhere to specific criteria of his art. He was compelled to agree with the "official" historical record. He dare not contradict it; of course, he could write freely as far as the "dark areas" of history was concerned, because there was no official record about it. This often happens when the novelist writes about a very distant and remote time of the past.

In addition to this, some novelists think that the inner world of their historical characters might be envisaged as "dark areas" as there is no official record available. The classic example of this is Tolstoy's character Napoleon in *War and Peace* where nobody knew how

and what Napoleon thought. Hence this is another norm for the historical novelist to treat his historical characters without the constraints of "official" record. In Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Gandhi is killed at wrong time, which is historically inaccurate. But for a novelist such official constraint hardly matters. In the historical fiction of the classic kind, however, fidelity to the official record was maintained to some extent, for it was meant to be realistic fiction. For this reason classic historical novelists thought that fantasy had little place in their novels and that a fantastic historical fiction was an anomaly.

In postmodernist historical fiction, on the other hand, the barriers between historical reality and fantastic psychological realism are dissolved. The merging of history and fantasy can be readily noticed in the postmodernist revisionist novel. In Ishmael Reed's novels *Mumbo Jumbo* (1973) and *Flight to Canada* (1977), historical figures are inserted in self-consciously anachronistic way. Other illicit mergings of history and the fantastic occur, for instance, in Elkin's *The Living End*, in which the historical Ilie Nastase is overheard by the dead but still conscious Ladlehaus from his grave beside the tennis court. Such merging occurs in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* where historical Sanjay Gandhi clones himself many times over. Even the protagonist of the novel is a fictional and historical amalgam of imagination and reality representing at once an individual and the nation – India. Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) tells the unlikely tale of five generations of a single South American family. In the words of Michael Wood : "...the great power of this... book lies in its mingling of the fabulous... and the horrific... and in its haunting sense of a potentially intelligible but always misunderstood history" (394-95). In other words, Marquez's novel commingles both probable and improbable stories by using the narrative technique of

magic realism. Marquez, like Carpentier and like the Paraguayan Augusto Roa Bastos, also wrote a dictator novel. Both his *Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975) and Roa Bastos's *I the Supreme* (1974) explore the fascination that dictators have repeatedly held for Latin American political culture.

In Canadian literature, Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (1974) is an experimental novel "... which moves away from realism into such techniques as MEMORYBANK MOVIE, a flashback inserted as a set-piece into the narrative... This is novel as meta-history..." (Djwa, 71). On the other hand, Robertson Davies's novels explore the multiple aspects of 'truth' through the use of several narrators to describe the same incident. Whereas Robert Kroetsch's western trilogy – *The Words of My Roaring* (1966), *The Studhorse Man* (1969) and *Gone Indian* (1973) – moves away from realism towards myth and fable. Margaret Atwood writes her novels as moral fables that are structured poetically by a series of dominant metaphors and which, unlike realistic fiction, work on the deeper level of myth and allegory. *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Surfacing* (1972), *Life Before Man* (1979) and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) are the novels which criticize the society they depict through a central metaphor. In Ghosh's novel *Shadow Lines* the trajectory of the partition and the riots fuse with the imaginative lenses of different characters. In Sahgal's *Rich Like Us*, too, one comes across the blurring of boundaries between historical reality and its imaginative impact on Sonali. Mistry and Hyder portray their characters in the light of historical events and their repercussions on the mental horizons of the protagonists.

In this way, the postmodernist novelist is clearly outside the classic paradigm of the historical novel. The postmodernist revisionist fiction allows historical characters to freely

move into its fictional world. It is often said that a fictional character cannot move out of the pages of a novel and share coffee with real life people. The opposite, however, can often take place in the new novel. A historical figure like Abraham Lincoln may come out of actual coffee-house and mix with the other fictional characters in the text. For instance, the historical Col. John Graham of Claverhouse in Scott's *Old Mortality* (1817) can ride away from the historical Skirmish at Drumclog and show up at the fictional Tillietudlem Tower. When such migrations occur, an ontological boundary between the real and the fictional has been transgressed. In Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Lenin appears from the Soviet Russia and meets other fictional characters in the novel. Sometimes, the novelist may introduce the historical characters directly in the narrative. For example, Ghosh does so in *The Glass Palace* by portraying the characters of historical king Thebaw and queen Supalayay of Myanmar. Sahgal also introduces the historical figure of Tilak in *Plans for Departure*, albeit indirectly. In her another novel *Mistaken Identity*, too, there are oblique references to historical Kemal Pasha and the other political figures. Whereas Mistry gives some pungent and sarcastic images of Mrs. Indira Gandhi in *Such a Long Journey*. In Rushdie there is the whole lot of historical figures both in *Midnight's children* and the subsequent novels. Hyder has also used historical figures in *River of Fire* and coloured them with the imaginary cast of various characters. In short, the new revisionist novel breaks free of the old constraints of the realistic historical novel.

Apart from this, the revisionist fiction contradicts the public record of "official" history. It integrates not only history with fantasy, but also flaunts anachronism. In fact, it violates all the norms of "classic" historical fiction. In Brian Mchale's view, the revisionist

novel presents an apocryphal history which is an alternative history in comparison with the official version. Mchale maintains that the "apocryphal history, creative anachronism, historical fantasy.... are the typical strategies of the postmodernist revisionist historical novel" (90). This kind of novel is revisionist in two senses : first, it revises the content of the historical record, re-interprets it; it often demystifies or debunks the orthodox version of the past. Secondly, it revises, indeed, transforms the very conventions of the historical novel itself.

Brian Mchale concludes that the apocryphal history depicted in the revisionist novel contradicts the official version in 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 case, apocryphal history operates in the "dark areas" of history, apparently in conformity to the norms of 'classic' historical novel, but in fact parodying them. In the second case, apocryphal history violates the "dark areas" constraint. In both ways, however, the effect is to juxtapose the officially accepted version with a subversive one. In this way, one sees in the revisionist history an interplay of the two versions simultaneously. At one moment there is a narrative flow of the official version, but the next moment it is either supplemented or displaced. On the contrary, the official version may emerge out of mirage-like fantasy of the alternative version with bludgeoning effect. It seems as though one were perpetually moving between the two worlds – the world of external reality and the world of internal fantastic reality. In fact, the boundary between the two is seamlessly merged and blurred into each other.

Furthermore, if official history is the history of the winners, then alternative history is the history of the losers. For instance, Stanley Elkin in *Mills* (1982) narrates episodes from

the long history of a family of perpetual losers who never cross the threshold into official history. Gunter Grass, similarly, writes the history of cooks, the women who fed and cared for history's "great men" and were left in historical anonymity for their pains. In Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Salim is a loser in the end. Ghosh's characters also lose their battles against the brutal realities of power struggles. Sahgal has also touched upon the characters who are the losers – Sonali, Rose and the beggar in *Rich Like Us*. Mistry also delineates the characters of the beggars and the tailor as the losers in *A Fine Balance*. Hyder depicts the character of Kemal as a sufferer and a loser in *River of Fire*. Secondly, official history is the history of the male sex; while the apocryphal history tells the stories of the female sex and the oppressed. In other words, the postmodernist revisionist novel underlines the story of the losers and failures. It chiefly deals with the socially excluded, marginalized and displaced men and women and chronicles their family saga as a narrative in parallel to the official national history.

In addition to this, the revisionist novel unravels a "secret history" of treachery and betrayal and the internal struggles among various groups and forces. For instance, in his post-modernist text *V.* (1963), Thomas Pynchon makes his characters suspect that the perpetual crises of the twentieth century might be the fruit of some vast conspiracy operating in the "dark areas" of history. While in *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), he seems to suggest that America might be the battlefield for a struggle between secret societies. On the other hand, in his *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon delineates the paranoiac mode of secret history, uncovering layer upon layer of conspiracy behind the official historical facts of the Second World War. In fact, one can see a web of conspiracies behind most of the important historical events of

the world – ranging from the World War-I in 1914, the Depression of 1929 to the World War-II in 1939-45. One can also notice a great game of power-politics between capitalists and communists and an intense struggle between terrorists and the State apparatuses. Side by side with such massive events of national or international importance, the postmodernist revisionist history does not lose sight of 'the most wretched of the earth'. For example, in Rushdie's fiction there is a plenty of common characters who are beggars, prostitutes and so on. They are juxtaposed with the narrative of the national and international histories. Rushdie gives voice to the 'little histories' in contrast to 'great history' of the world. In short, the revisionist history restores the 'lost' or 'subaltern' groups like peasantry, working class and the minorities who find their space in its narrative.

Revising history has a basic purpose for the postmodernist novelist. By revising it he calls the reliability of official history into question. For this purpose the postmodernists fictionalize history, but in doing so they seem to suggest that history itself may be another form of fiction. Likewise, fiction can compete with the official record as a vehicle of historical truth, no matter how fantastic and anachronistic its nature. This shows how the two disciplines merge and how their boundaries are blurred most often. In other words, the realization of 'history as fiction' and 'fiction as history' is brought to home. In a way historian and the novelist exchange their place – history becoming fictionalized and fiction becoming a 'true' history.

In view of this situation prevalent both in historiographic writing and fiction writing, one becomes aware of the nature of their representation – that both deal with telling stories. The very nature of representing reality in both is grounded in the narrative framework. Ac-

According to Hutcheon, both fiction and history deal with telling stories in different modes. Sometimes the modes employed by them are borrowed from cinema and photography. Citing Brian McHale's position in his *Postmodernist Fiction*, Hutcheon observes :

Brian McHale has noted that both modernist and postmodernist fiction show an affinity for cinematic models, and certainly the work of Manuel Puig or Salman Rushdie would support such a claim. But historiographic metafiction obsessed with the question of how we can come to know the past today, also shows an attraction to photographic models... In raisingthe issue of photographic representation, postmodern fiction often points metaphorically to the related issue of narrative representation – its powers and its limitations. (47).

Both the historian and the novelist try to 'construct' truth by means of narrativizing the real world phenomena. Of course the 'truth' presented by them is relative and subjective and specific to their own situatedness in history. Both of them select some aspect of subject and then start building up the narrative pattern which finally results into a finished product as 'story'. Owing to this, the question of narrative representation assumes paramount importance in the revisionist fiction. According to Linda Hutcheon, this question raises its corollary question – the question of politics. Commenting on Hayden White's article, she says, "articles like.. "[T]he value of narrativity in the representation of reality", have been influential in both history and literature" (50). She rightly holds the view that both in history and fiction the very manner of representing the past " is done in such a way that the politics of the act of representing are made manifest (59). In other words, the politics of representation lie embedded in the narrative structure of 'story'.

In addition, the postcolonial theory and criticism also deal with the nature of representation in the revisionist novel. Here the issue of revision in history is raised by analyzing postcolonial literatures produced by subjects in the context of colonial domination most notably in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. For example, in the major works of Chinua Achebe, Ngugi and Soyinka, the colonial experience has been acknowledged and explored in depth. These writers have shown how the encounter with colonial authority set up inescapable conflicts within African societies. The ruining of rural tradition by colonialism is a theme that has preoccupied both Achebe and Ngugi. V. S. Naipaul, a Caribbean novelist, has also dealt with the history of colonial experience in his novels and autobiographical writings, e.g., *A House for Biswas* (1961), *A Bend in the River* (1979), *An Area of Darkness*, (1964), *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987). The colonial and linguistic history of the Caribbean not unnaturally provides much material for novelists. Derek Walcott has emphasized that "the Caribbean psyche is a product of the total colonial experience, owing as much to Europe as to Africa and India". (Creighton 448). Caribbean history is largely clouded in myth prior to the arrival of Columbus in 1492. The settlement that began with Columbus led to colonialism and slavery, together with the imposition of European languages. "When they conquer you, you have to read their books" is how Walcott puts it. The effects of colonialism thus reflect in Caribbean writing.

Likewise, in the work of Jose Donoso, *The Obscene Bird of Night* (1973) and *A House in the Country* (1978), history becomes a malign carnival. For Vargas Llosa, particularly in *Conversation in the Cathedral* (1970) and the sweeping *The War of the End of the World* (1981), which recounts a historical rebellion in the backlands of Brazil in the nine-

teenth century, when religious fanaticism almost overcame all the forces of supposed reason and modernity opposed to it, history is a ruinous riddle, with its taunting perennial question - where did it all go wrong ? Fuentes's *Terra Nostra* (1975) is a spectacular conflation of old and new history, gliding from contemporary Paris to the Spain of the time of the building of the Escorial palace in the sixteenth century, and from there to the New World in the early days of its discovery by Europeans. One of the greatest novels in Spanish of the twentieth century is *Hopscotch* (1963), by the Argentinian Julio Cortazar. This novel is about reading and about falling between alternative worlds. Cortazar insisted on the possibility in narrative of presenting forking paths and thus alternative realities. Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier wrote his novel *Explosion in a Cathedral* (1962), which is a brilliant and profuse evocation of life in the Caribbean at the time of the French Revolution. His another novel *Reasons of State* (1974) is an exploration of the fading power of a Europe loving Latin American dictator. These books are dense with detail, and very remote from any oral narrative tradition. They do, however, share with other novels of their time the sense of history as an often brutal farce.

The postcolonial studies, which is an interdisciplinary field, thus examines the global impact of European colonialism right from its beginnings in the fifteenth century up to the present. The aim of this studies is to describe the mechanisms of colonial power, to recover excluded or marginalized 'subaltern' voices and to theorize the complexities of colonial and postcolonial identity, national belonging and globalization. All these are duly reflected in the novels of Rushdie, Sahgal, Ghosh, Mistry and Hyder. The postcolonial critics follow the pioneer example of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, which argues that the West has constructed

the Third World as its 'Other'. Following Said, postcolonial critics examine the ways in which western representations of third world countries serve the political interests of their makers.

Furthermore, postcolonial theory examines how institutions of western education function in the spread of imperialism – that is, by disseminating the imperialistic discourse in the narrative of different works of literature and history. For instance, Lord Macaulay's *Minutes on Indian Education* shows that education, including English literature and the English language, plays a strategic part in ruling over colonized peoples. Education, then, becomes a kind of cultural imperialism, creating a class of colonial subjects often burdened by a double consciousness and divided loyalties. In short, the aim of such agenda in education is to help western colonizers to rule by consent rather than by force. Though it is not like painful physical violence, yet in a way the imperialistic narrative does a kind of epistemic violence to the third world countries.

Hence in postcolonial criticism one comes across the question of narrative. It shows how both colonial power and colonized people represent history in their own texts. For instance, Ngugi's novel, *Weep Not, Child* (1984), deals with the situation of 'the dispossessed, tenant farmers, landless labourers, or fighters seeking to regain the land which is home' (qtd. in Harding 13). His another novel *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) articulates the system of alienation which colonialism set up. In like manner, Canadian novelist Rudy Wiebe's *The Blue Mountains of China* (1970) is a moving experimental novel narrated by a series of Menno-nite voices, all of them different. *The Temptations of Big Bear* (1973) and *The Scorched-Wood People* (1977) are also experimental in form in which Wiebe successfully represents the Indian and *metis* past. This process of representation, in fact, characterises postcolonialism.

Commenting on the nature of postcolonialism, Leela Gandhi aptly announces that "[I]t is a disciplinary project....of revisiting, remembering and crucially interrogating the colonial past" (4). In addition, the cultures of colonizers and colonized conflict, interact, then negotiate with each other and give rise to the hybrid nature of culture. This aspect is mainly visualized in the novels of Rushdie and Ghosh which express the multiple spaces of the Indian diaspora and its encounters with the other cultures of the world. The novels of Rushdie and Ghosh duly prove that no culture is ever pure. In fact, this is quite evident today in the era of globalized postindustrial capitalism. The narrative of nationalism which underpins notions of pure culture is daily called into question by the postcolonial realities of the modern world in the forms of globalization and hybridization.

In *Orientalism*, Said speaks of such European colonialism and its history. In a way his book is a foundational text for postcolonial theory, for it treats of European colonialism as a narrative 'discourse'; as an imperial textuality with its own covert politics to represent 'orient' as the 'other' for the western hegemonic cultures. Said holds the view that such imperialistic discourse rendered the 'orient' as playground for "western desires, repressions, projections" (qtd. in Gandhi 143). For him the role of the novel is no less remarkable in promoting the cause of western imperialism. He points out that it was the Victorian novel which authorized imperialism as the bedrock of British cultural identity and "imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible...to read one without in some way dealing with the other" (qtd.in Gandhi 144).

In the Indian context, Gauri Vishwanathan's book *Masks of Conquest* (1989) also exposes the impact of such colonial narrative in terms of English literature. Vishwanathan claims

that the British rule in India used English literature as a strategy to contain the threat of native revolt. The thrust of her argument is that English literature introduced in India was just a mask of "... popularizing the human face of English culture and Englishmen" (qtd. in Gandhi 145). According to Vishwanathan, there was thus an intimate relationship between English rule and English literature in the colonial period.

Furthermore, feminist theory and criticism are also vitally linked with the issue of narrative representation in the revisionist novel. Feminist criticism focuses on how women are rendered marginalized by male-dominated patriarchal society. Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1968), for example, is the "act of looking back and revising *Jane Eyre*..." putting two cultures and two genders" against one another" (Jain, *Women's Writing* 114). In this novel, Rhys has brought to light the oppressive presence of male domination through the character of Rochester. Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* (1969) depicts the metaphor of woman as a commodity and challenges such male-chauvinist stance in the patriarchal society. The Somali writer Nuruddin Farah's *From Crooked Rib* (1970) tells a tale of the heroine's betrayal. The novel "follows the fortunes of Ebla as she flees an arranged marriage in the rural areas, visiting a cousin in Mogadishu and taking up with a young teacher who later leaves for Italy..." (Harding 12). Feminism seeks to revision women's history pitted against the narrative of binary oppositions like male/female, man/woman, angel/monster and so on. At the same time, it also underlines political differences and conflicts even within feminist circles. There are hence different categories like woman of colour, white woman, women from different classes, women belonging to different groups and nations, and women who are liberals, conservatives, radicals, revolutionaries, and lesbians. In recent time, the focus is laid on the Third

World women who feel silenced and unrepresented in mainstream social agendas which rarely consider their needs or issues.

Since feminism articulates women's issues, its linkages with postcolonialism and postmodernism become evidently clear. In the words of Bill Ashcroft *et al.*, "the history and concerns of feminist theory have strong parallels with postcolonial theory" (75). That is, both try to focalize on the issues of 'Third World Women', and their identifiable 'marginality'. Of course, the fact of women's marginality, as it is imposed on them by 'outside' and 'inside' forces, cannot be ignored. Numerous critics, therefore, have been engaged in analyzing the post-colonial re-writings of history. For example, Aijaz Ahmad critiques the post-colonial novel of the Third World in his engrossing study – *In Theory : Classes, Nations, Literatures* (1994). According to Ahmad, the third World novel may be defined by : "...the range of questions that may be asked of the texts...refer to representations of colonialism, nationhood, postcoloniality, the typology of rules, their powers, corruptions, and so forth" (124). Like him, Meenakshi Mukherjee also explicates the subtle aspects of Indian novel. In fact, she has effected a paradigmatic shift in the study of Indian novel in English. In her important work, *Realism and Reality : The Novel and Society in India* (1985), Mukherjee gives a scholarly and well-researched analysis of the emergence and growth of the novelistic tradition in Indian languages during the past two hundred years. In her view, English has only served to mediate on a form of narrative that was already present in a country which has great narrative traditions. In her another important book, *The Perishable Empire – Essays on Indian Writing in English* (2000), she considers the layered context of the Indian languages surrounding English and thereby explicates the intricate socio-economic pressures that impinge on literary

production. In that way, her book is an attempt "...to consider the complex and evolving relationships between English and India through literary texts that emerged out of this contact from the mid-nineteenth century to the end of the millenium" (Mukherjee, *The Perishable Empire* xi).

Likewise, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is also an important voice in the theory and criticism of postcolonial literature. In her work, in an unsettling voice, she combines passionate denunciations of the harm done to women, non-Europeans and the poor by the privileged west. Voicing her intense feminist concern for the underprivileged, she warns that "if, in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (*Norton* 2203). According to Spivak, much of the point of revisionist history, of returning to scenes of domination and oppression, is to reactivate attempts at speaking that other forces tried to obliterate and keep from having effects. In revisiting Bhuvaneshwari's suicide, Spivak makes it speak in new ways. The historian, who tries to recover the past, should also sketch "the itinerary of the trace" that the subaltern has left. He should mark the sites where the subaltern was effaced, and should delineate the discourses that did the effacing.

Homi K. Bhabha is another prominent figure in postcolonial studies. He has infused thinking about nationality, ethnicity, and politics with poststructuralist theories of identity and indeterminacy – all of which are reflected in his two books – *Nation and Narration* (1990) and *The Location of Culture* (1994). Building on the influential concept of nations set forth by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* (1983), Bhabha stresses how "nationality is narratively produced rather than arising from an intrinsic essence" (*Norton* 1377).

While drawing on Bakhtin's concept of dialogue, Bhabha emphasizes that "colonialism is not a one-way street, but entails an interaction between colonizer and colonized" (*Norton* 2377-78). Finally, regarding the question of identity, he draws on Fanon's psychoanalytic model of colonialism and Jacques Lacan's concepts of "mimicry" and the split subject, suggesting that "there is always an "excess" in the cultural imitation that the colonial subject is forced to produce" (*Norton* 2378). In Bhabha's view, this mimicry both revises colonial narrative and creates a new, hybrid identity for the colonial subject.

To sum up, both critics and novelists have engaged themselves in locating different narratives in the historical representations in the postcolonial literatures. Whereas the critics theorize about such representations, the novelists are busy in showing them in the concrete forms of their novels. In short, narrative plays a key role in both – the description of history and the fictional account. If history historicizes certain facts, then fiction also historicizes those facts in its own specific way. The content of the historical material is determined in the manner in which it is presented – both in history as well as the novel. That is, both are vitally concerned with their acts of re-telling or narrating the historical facts. Examined in this light, 'facts' become sub-ordinated to the question of the narrative which also assumes paramount importance in recent critique of Indian English historical fiction.

II

The beginning of the Indian English historical novel, however, was firstly made by Bankimchandra Chatterjee's novel *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864), which "... is a potent site for discussing crucial issues about language, culture, colonization and representation" (Mukherjee,

The Perishable Empire 48). In this novel history remained a prominent strand of narrative. In the early phase of Indian novel, however, history was mostly steeped in the historical romance rather than realistic mode. Indeed, the Indian novel experimented with the genre of the historical novel and passed through the three distinct periods before obtaining its present mature state. These stages are – the earliest period, the middle period and the post-1980s.

As Bengal was the first region to come in close contact with the British, the earliest novels came to be written in Bangla. The novels written in this language were sketchy representations of Bengali society, but later on "... the new genre really became established with the historical novel form" (Mukherjee, *Twice-born Fiction* 19). Although the form of the novel emerged at different times in different parts of India, yet the first crop showed its preoccupation with the historical romance. For this reason, the Indian English novel too, though a late arrival in comparison with the other Bhasha novels, found a variety of historical novels in such works as S.K. Ghose's *The Prince of Destiny* and S.K. Mitra's *Hindus*, both of which were published in 1909. The depiction of history in these novels were markedly in the romantic tradition with little reference to actual facts. In the early thirties, moreover, one comes across A.S. Panchpakesa Ayyar's *Baladitya* and Umrao Bahadur's *The Unveiled Court*. The latter presented the story of a native prince's court with its colourful past. Although this novel may not be reckoned as a proper historical novel, yet it exploited the same glamour of a past time as does any genuine historical novel. In fact, it dealt with the subject matter to which the Indian English novelists "... have returned more often than novelists in the Indian languages" (Mukherjee, *Twice-born Fiction* 20).

The popularity of the historical romance, however, was obviously linked with the awakening of Indian nationalism. As the people of India were being oppressed by the British rulers,

the sentiment of nationalistic fervour among the Indians gave rise to the celebration of their past glory. The novelists turned to realistically represent the public issues either of the remote or recent past in their writings. During the 1930s and 1940s, consequently, there emerged a literary movement called the "Progressive Writers' Movement", which included the writers of the major Bhasha languages in Hindi, Bangla, Kannada, Malayalam and Urdu. Progressive writers like Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas dealt with the problems of the untouchability, casteism, economic inequality and social injustice. These writers leant heavily on the Marxist philosophy by depicting social realism in their fictional production. In other words, this time was the beginning of 'realism' in Indian literature that faithfully reflected the struggle for independence.

The arrival of Mahatma Gandhi in India from South Africa in 1915 also gave an impetus and inspiration to this narrative of freedom struggle. It is therefore natural that the Gandhian ideals of communal harmony, simplicity, renunciation and the service of mankind are abundantly delineated in the fiction written during this period. In Indian English fiction – the writings of R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao in particular – there is a clear impact of Gandhi and his national spirit. In Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, the influence of Gandhian thought on the whole community of a small town is clearly manifest. Anand's *The Sword and the Sickle* also narrates the national movement from Gandhian point of view. Likewise, K.A. Abbas's *Inquilab* and Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* represent at once the national movement and the discourse of Gandhian ideology, albeit in post-colonial terms, since both the novels were published in the year 1955. Both the novels, therefore, treat the personality of Gandhi differently from their predecessors' treatment of Gandhi. Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly comments that the figure of historical Gandhi "...has been treated variously, as an idea, a myth,

a symbol, a tangible reality, and a benevolent human being" (*Twice-born Fiction* 60).

The independence movement associated with Gandhi was not merely a political struggle, but it was also an all-pervasive emotional experience. This experience is subtly conveyed through Venkatramani's *Murugan the Tiller* (1927) and *Kandan the Patriot* (1932). Likewise, K. Nagarjan's *The Chronicles of Kedaram* also retells a family saga seen against the changing patterns of history by describing the effects of the nationalist movement on a small town. again, Nayantara Sahgal's first novel *A Time to be Happy* (1952) also portrays the freedom movement and Gandhi's influence on the lives of many men and women. In that way, Gandhi's personal struggle against the British became the people's struggle for independence for their country.

In the period following independence of India, several novelists still looked back at the past colonial time. For instance, Kamala Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury* (1955) is set in the historical year 1942, when the struggle for independence in India was at its most intense phase. Markandaya's novel, however, is basically a novel about love between the two people who belong to the different races of colonizer and colonized. It examines the impact of the troubled national spirit upon their love. Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) describes the troubled years before and after the partition of India which is filtered through the consciousness of a young Muslim girl living in Lucknow. The fourth part of the novel, in particular, takes up the narrative of a critical period of Indian history in which Hosain portrays the second world war, the formation of the Indian National Army, the agitation of 1942, communal violence, independence and finally the partition. Against the backdrop of such brutal realities of history, Hosain gives a vivid portrait of the people and their manners embedded in a historical moment of India. At this time, moreover, novelists also emphasized the need for

communal amity between Hindus and Muslims. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), for example, skilfully brings to surface this issue. His novel describes human atrocities and ruthless cruelties between the two communities in view of the partition of India. To show a silver-lining amid the darkest clouds of communal phrenzy, however, Singh bases the narrative of the novel on the love-affair between Jugga, a Sikh ruffian and a Muslim girl. Highlighting the human side of Jugga, Singh shows him to thwart Sikh fanatics' attempt to derail the train bound for Pakistan and thus saves the lives of the hundreds of innocent people. In making such a noble and heroic attempt, however, Jugga meets his tragic end.

Like Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgaonkar is also equally interested in presenting the whole struggle for India's independence and its aftermath resulting in the partition in his celebrated novel – *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964). Both in its scope and epic dimension, the novel is a mammoth narrative of the historical events ranging from the Civil Disobedience Movement of the early 1930s to the post-partition riots in the Punjab. Malgaonkar's narrative brings to light the bitter truth that freedom was a hard-earned trophy that was attended by violence, bloodshed and betrayal. Likewise, Chaman Nahal is another historical novelist who also deals with Indian history in his novel – *Azadi* (1975), where he evokes the vision of India's freedom and the horrific partition accompanied by mass killing and vast influx of refugees. Bhisham Sahani also wrote the novel of partition in *Tamas*. Sahani wrote this novel in Hindi, but it has been translated into English. Rahi Masoom Raza's *Aadha Gaon*, Yashpal's *Jhootha Sach* are the other novels depicting the beast of partition. In Bapsy Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man*, too, the horror of partition is filtered through the vulnerable vision of a Parsi girl. In short, during the periods of the 1960s and 70s, there had been abundant writing on India's struggle for freedom and the partition of the country. In that sense, the Indian historical novel passed

through different stages and trends during its growth and development. As has been mentioned earlier, it was largely dominated by the historical romance in its earliest phase, but gradually "... the romance of the early historical novel in most Indian languages soon yielded to realism" (Jain, "The Plural Tradition" 68). Jain believes that realism was a necessary stage in Indian literature because it had risen in response to the need of the hour. But it was only a passing phase, because it was not adequate for the Indian English novel to express its diverse narrative possibilities.

It was only in the post-1980s that the Indian English novel expressed its diverse and variegated nuances of the revisionist historical fiction. This period was intensely marked by the rewritings of history and re-statements of past events. In the words of Viney Kirpal, the 1980s "... has been a bursting forth of Indian novels like myriad flowers on a laburnum tree" (xiii). Kirpal compares the decade of the 80s with the rich harvest of the 1960s when a number of Indian English novels were published. The eighties also mark such a peak for the Indian English novel. In fact, there had been specific political, economic and intellectual forces in India during the seventies and eighties that gave rise to such a creative outburst. For instance, the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the massacre of Sikhs in 1984, the call of Khalistan, the sporadic outcries for a fundamentalist Hindu/Muslim identity – although disturbing events, "... have only worked to reaffirm the need for national integration and the recognition of plurality" (Kirpal xxi). Consequently the novels of the post-80s reflect, as never before, the theme of the mixed Indian tradition. It gives voice to cultural syncretism, multi-cultural and multiple identities where all communal groups including the minorities find an important space. Novelists chose to portray the characters from all and sundry section of the Indian society in order to understand their world-views. The earlier east-west conflict, moreover, is

also resolved and one finds several major characters of different nationalities mingling freely with the Indian characters. These characters "... are also comparatively more cosmopolitan and de-regionalized in their outlook than are the characters in the novels of the 1960s and the 1970s" (Kirpal xxii).

Furthermore, it is only during the 1980s that one finds a good deal of the revisionist history depicted in the novel. The novelists, therefore, tend to re-interpret and re-invent India's past and its myth. For instance, R.K.Narayan re-interprets the myth of Narada, an Indian mythical God, in his novel *The World of Nagaraj* (1989). After his well-known *Train to Pakistan*, Khushwant Singh writes *Delhi* (1989), which is a fictionalized history of Delhi. Apart from these novelists, the other Indian novelists have also evinced their interest in narrativizing historical discourse. For instance, Shashi Tharoor's novel *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) also thematizes the history of India and thus emblemizes the pre-occupation with re-viewing history obtaining in post-colonial writings. The epic of *The Mahabharata* becomes narrative parallels not only for the title of the novel, but also in its entire fabric and structure; it metaphorically parallels the great epic's mode and methodology. *The Great Indian Novel*, like the *Mahabharata*, is divided into eighteen books and Tharoor's tale is narrated by the epic poet's namesake Ved Vyas. In the words of Salat : "Tharoor inscribes the story of modern India in the ancient epical narrative and posits a fictional structure where-in the narratives of ancient and modern India straddle each other and together function to enshrine a holistic portrayal of India's cultural heritage" (127).

In like manner, Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* (1980) is set in the historical background of the partition. In this novel, Desai gives a new meaning and dimension to the perception of the partition. In fact, she uses it as a symbol to depict the rift between Bim and

Raja. Desai seems to suggest that India and Pakistan are also like the two members of the same family. Ironically, however, the rift between them in the form of partition took place at a time when they got freedom from the colonial rule. In that way, Desai draws a parallel between the story of Bim and Raja and the partition of India in a symbolic narrative. Vikram Chandra, like Tharoor, also ranges over the history and mythology of India and uses the narrative framework of the Mahabharata in *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995). Whereas in *Looking Through Glass* (1995), Mukul Kesavan looks through a magnifying glass "...the five years before India's independence and specifically at the social conditions at the time of Quit India Movement" (Mongia 221). Allan Sealy in his *Trotternama* (1988) goes back in time in the eighteenth century to trace the genealogy of an anglo-Indian family to a French mercenary ancestor. Bharati Mukherjee, on the other hand, has written *The Holder of the World* – a kind of cultural science-fiction in which experiments in virtual reality by an Indian computer scientist helps the heroine to travel back in the seventeenth century India. Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996) is a medical thriller written as a scientific treatise about malaria parasite. In a way, the narrative of the novel explores the relationship between the history of malaria and secret mystical order in almost Foucauldian terms. The novels written in the post-1980s thus inscribe the narrative quest / ion in the most of Indian English novels as the dominant narrative mode.

The present study, therefore, proposes to examine the different modes and patterns of narrative used in the select writings of Nayantara Sahgal, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry and Qurratulain Hyder. Their writings typify different modes and tropes of narrativity in terms of revisionist history and therefore they are selected here for special case studies.

Particularly in Hyder's three works of fiction, viz., *River of Fire*, *A Season of Betrayals*, and *Fireflies in the Mist*, a distinctive narrative pattern emerges in which feminine history is depicted as a series of betrayals. She brings up the theme of betrayal through different narrative devices. For instance, she devises the narrative by mixing the omniscient point of view with the first person mode of narration. At times she introduces several narrators as central intelligences of the narrative. At other times, she presents her characters' interior monologues in a stream of consciousness technique. Further, she makes ample use of the letters, diaries, documents, travelogues or the journalistic reports to include the larger canvas of reality in her narrative. This lends her fiction the multiple perspective and the depth of vision. In short, she uses all this narrative technique with a view to showing the pattern of the betrayal which is visible not only at the historical level, but also at the personal level. In this way, Hyder shows the plight of women by emphasizing their betrayals by men in the backdrop of the social, political, and historical factors.

Rushdie's fiction also gives a blow-by-blow account of how different versions of history are 'constructed' and 'tailored' and thereby provides the alternate versions that offer a threat to politician's version. The inextricable link between individual and history is at the centre of Rushdian narrative since *Midnight's Children* where the protagonist is born handcuffed to history. As far as the narrative strategy is concerned, Rushdie's fictional production may be classified into two modes – magic–realist and fantastic, with the former predominating. Here Rushdie's strategy is to blur the boundaries between fiction and truth, story and history. By dismantling the grand narratives of history, Rushdie articulates the subaltern historiography of India in terms of magic realism and fantasy.

The term 'magic realism' was first used of a style of painting in the 1920s, but is now

applied to the literary style as well. It is used in three rather different senses. One sense suggests that reality actually is marvellous in the postcolonial countries, being full of wonders unknown to Europeans or, indeed, to Americans. This 'magic realism' is thus a matter of geography and natural history, and not of a literary mode. Another version of the term has it that peoples like Indians, Mexicans or Latin Americans not only tell fantastic stories but also believe them; that they are superstitious and that superstition is therefore their reality; that there *are* ghosts and miracles if you believe in them. This view is meant to be sympathetic but can easily become very condescending. A third notion, overlapping partly with this, is that any story, including the most fantastic ones, can be told as if it were commonplace, and should surprise no one. This third 'magic realism' is a question, not of geography or comparative superstition, but of narrative technique : to practise 'magic realism' is to present the unlikely in a calmly realistic manner. Hence it becomes clear that writers like Rushdie, Grass and Marquez assert the freedom of the story-teller, who relays the community's sense of itself, which may require extremes of fantasy for its expression – or extreme mixtures of fantasy and a grimly fantastic reality. Gunter Grass did this, for instance, in *The Tin Drum*, Marquez in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and of course Rushdie did it in *Midnight's Children*. In short, Rushdie's fictional output may be read as constituting an imaginative model of the Indian subcontinent of the twentieth century.

Like Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh also presents an alternative view of history in his novels. He offers the re-visioning of history through different modes – historical reconstruction, magic realism, and the narrative of third space. Ghosh's imagination, however, like Rushdie's, is a product of specific histories of the subcontinent in the twentieth century and to that extent it is as necessarily diasporic as it is postcolonial. For this reason his novels trace out the

multiple spaces of Indian diaspora. He not only retells the story of *homeland* and the 'adopted land but also creates a third space in his narrative. For example in his novel *In an Antique Land*, he uses the mode of third space by moving away from the moorings in the homeland and the land of adoption. In short, in his three novels, *Shadow Lines*, *In an Antique Land* and *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh employs the narrative mode of the third space. In addition, he also makes use of the narratives of personal history, travel-writing, the memoirs and recollections which return to homeland.

Rohinton Mistry's narrative focalizes on the Bombay world and the Parsi setting. At the same time, Mistry also depicts the dilemmas of dislocation and identity crisis of Parsi community. In *Such a Long Journey*, Mistry evokes the historical background of the 1971 war for the liberation of Bangladesh. The novel narrativizes the theme of betrayal and corruption rampant in the Indian society. At the same time it also brings out the decadence and xenophobia of the tiny community of the Parsis living in Mumbai. His next novel *A Fine Balance* goes back to the events of 1947 – the partition and the riots and to those of 1974 – the height of the Emergency period and the narrative ends with the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 and its aftermath in the Sikh massacre in Delhi. In this novel Mistry gives the revision of history through realistic mode. In short, through his novels, Mistry chronicles the distinctive world of Parsi culture within a historical moment.

Nayantara Sahgal, on the other hand, has remained a dominant voice since early fifties and still continues to write on the historical aspects of India. In her novels she distrusts and misreads "received" version of official history. In that way she explodes and exposes such a received version and challenges its validity. Her main interest lies in the political and social history of India – both pre – and post-independence. In this sense, she articulates her own

histories or anti-histories that consciously oppose the officially-ordered histories of government and other power groups. At the same time, she also gives voice to feminist concerns by juxtaposing the nation's history with women's history in her female characters. Through different narrative strategies, she brings out the binary opposition between the narrative of patriarchy and the women's dilemma. This has been examined in analytical detail in the second chapter.

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