Preface

Political fiction is considered as the direct descendant of the nineteenth-century social novel. The complex realities of a rapidly evolving society which eluded the attention of the social novelist, constituted the raw materials for the political novelist. A political novel invariably depicts the complex dynamics of the society and offers the reader a means for understanding the important aspects of the society in which he lives. In such a novel; action, characters and setting are firmly grounded in politics. It can enrich our sense of human experience. A political novel generates such intense heat that the ideas it appropriates are melted into its movement and fused with the emotions of its characters. A political novelist endows the political ideology with the capacity for striving character into passionate gestures and sacrifices.

The genre of political fiction has invited a large body of critical writings. Various theories were formulated giving plenitude of definitions ranging from the elementary to the most sophisticated for the term ‘political fiction’. Contemporary political novelists evince a sustained enthusiasm in portraying the trivialization and desecration of human values under authoritarian regimes. They exhibit a striking similarity in their response to the abuse of political power. Political degeneration seems to be the major
preoccupation of many of the post-Independence Indian English political novelists. There arose a new crop of political novelists whose aesthetic perception was modulated by innovative strategies of demystification. They took liberties with the presentation of Indian politics and the life of individuals by fashioning new fictional methods.

Salman Rushdie, O. V. Vijayan and Shashi Tharoor share the same artistic temperament in experimenting with new techniques of demystification. The Emergency that marked the culmination of the relentless craze for power exhibited by semi-fascist regime casts its terrifying shadows in their works. *Midnight’s Children* of Rushdie, *The Saga of Dharmapuri* of Vijayan and *The Great Indian Novel* of Tharoor are the novels taken for close analysis in the thesis. As literary works of an extremely complex nature, they demand new perspectives and approaches. It is hoped they would provide a new dimension to the aesthetics of political fiction.

Political theory is the critical tool employed in the thesis and a close textual reading is the critical approach followed to explore the meticulously crafted fictional world of Salman Rushdie, O. V. Vijayan and Shashi Tharoor. References are also made to the other works of these novelists to illuminate the complexity and richness of their political imagination.
A thorough knowledge of the major trends in political fiction and the dominant theories that influenced this literary genre is obligatory for any serious perception of the stylistic innovations. Hence the opening chapter of this thesis *Political Fiction Redefined* is devoted to the discussion of various theories that formulated the concept of political fiction. It also makes a detailed survey of the political fiction before and after Orwell. The stylistic and thematic variations in the post-Independence Indian English political fiction also get adequate space in the discussion.

The second chapter *Deconstruction of Language and Fictionalization of History* makes a close textual analysis of the stylistic concerns of Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*. This novel is pivotal in the history of Indian English fiction in that it inaugurated a new way of writing in India. Rushdie perfects the technique of magic realism in this novel. The most daring strategy of demystification employed by Rushdie was the use of hybridized English. *Midnight’s Children* straddles two languages each having its own cultural baggage and literary tradition.

The post-Independence period manifested a continuance of the colonial legacy in almost every facet of modern Indian life such as society, culture, economy, politics and administration. This resulted in the colonial ‘cultural revolution’ of the country. It is this traumatic ambivalence and the political disjunctions that
sensitized the creative mind of O. V. Vijayan to experiment with outrageous paradigms of fictionalization. Chapter three of this thesis *Existential Politics* attempts a comprehensive study of the excremental and erotic imagery employed by Vijayan in *The Saga of Dharmapuri*. The chapter also tries to present the sense of degeneration that is shared by all those who figure in the novel, by the perpetrator of injustice as well as its victim. The libidinal and scatological imagery in the novel evoke the cultural and moral degradation of the rulers and the ruled in Dharmapuri.

Historiographic deconstruction is a popular stratagem of the political novelists who attempt to demythify the metanarratives of history. Chapter four *Dynamics of Demythification* is a survey of Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* which is a reconstructed form of the epic, *The Mahabharata*. The novel dovetails the traditional and the contemporary and offers a brilliant analysis of the Indian political scene. By interweaving the two, he has succeeded not only in casting a cynical modern sensibility upon the great legends of the past but also in casting some of the values of that past onto the experiences of the recent past. The battle of Kurukshetra gets transformed into the battle against totalitarianism in the novel. Tharoor taps the resources of the mythical prefigurations in the Indian epic for the re-interpretation of the political history of India. The superimposition
of the political incidents of the post-Emergency period on the basic tapestry of the great epic is made plausible as well as palatable by the judicious variations in the stylistic levels and tones. The innumerable characters and events in *The Mahabharata* are given new habitations and names in Tharoor’s novel. The loose structure of the master text and the lack of a definite manuscript enabled the author to have greater flexibility in casting political personages in the mould of epic characters. The demythification of *The Mahabharata* was done to eclipse its epic grandeur which was necessary to make it capture the pedestrian politics of the twentieth-century India.

The last chapter **Conclusion** consolidates and re-organizes the similarity and intricacy of political imagination, and the common strategies of demystification employed by the three novelists. There is a separate list of **Works Cited** along with a comprehensive list of the works consulted entitled **Selected Bibliography**, appended after the concluding chapter. Sixth edition of *The MLA Handbook* has been consistently used for documentation in this thesis.

The sensitive minds of Rushdie, Vijayan and Tharoor were deeply anguished by the terrible existential problems thrown up by the pervasive policies of power-hungry and blood-thirsty regime. They made a literal transcreation of the ugly face of power politics
in India by experimenting with astounding stylistic innovations and aesthetic techniques. There was a complete deviation from the linear plot structure in their novels. The spatial and temporal montages were designed to spur the reader’s imagination. The fictional fabric accommodates fact and fiction unobtrusively. The creative profusion of Rushdie, Vijayan and Tharoor provide scope for further literary research which could be in the form of an exploration into the intricacies of political fiction based on an exhaustive structural and stylistic reading of their novels.