

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Mapping the Potentiality of the Work

As Hindi writer Rajendra Yadav explains: "Writing is determined by your readers. For the IWE, his readership is less than 30 per cent Indian. . . . At best, the IWE showcases Indian life, whereas we grapple with it. The IWE take a touristy look at India. . . . They travel into our culture, describe a bit of our geography; their total approach is to Westerners: a third rate serpent-and-rope trick". (Reddy)

There is an implication here that only in the English language do Indian writers have the vantage point or at least feel the obligation, to articulate that postcolonial totality called 'India' (on the other hand, it sometimes seems that the post colonial totality only exists in the works of Indian English novelists, or in the commentaries they engender). (Chaudhury xxiii)

These statements may not be seen merely as the sparks of the creative genius, which these two writers, writing in two different languages—the former in Hindi and the latter in English—portray during moments they rise up to defend the positions from which they write or intend to write. Rather these statements may be seen as enabling one to take a "panoptic" (Huddart 67) view of the domain of Indian literature, resting upon a deep divide about the way these writers choose or have chosen to represent nation in their texts. (Panoptic view seems to have been

cleansed of its negativity. Some critics suspect that it refigures in critical thinking lately as the "place from which the world is seen" [Myers11] or the objective distance necessary for critiquing what according to Myers is our "over proximity to the real" [Myers 57] )

On the one hand, *Bhasa* writers' representation of a nation, often described as an exercise in "mimesis" (Simms 80), is presumed to arise out of, and integrate with, an effort to add credibility and legitimize the political rhetoric and religious conviction about the nation's "epochal"(Howells 7) character, the myth of its pure or "unmediated presence"(Howells 10). On the other, representations of nation by those, writing in English are supposed to be guided by, and ensconced within, the logic of cosmopolitanism, not the kind we sometime refer to while attempting to broaden the notion of "indigeneity" (Lopez 112), but the kind that may be suspected of being nurtured by the "de-territorializing" (Colebrook 65) impulses of "the cultural logic of late capitalism" (Roberts 118). (It is interesting to note that such contrary presumptions exist—as they always did—as readymade tools to critique the eruption of post-historical consciousness, the feel of living in times, with potential to resolve the binaries in what some critics call the "global flow of capital" [Hardt and Negri 45]). Though there are numerous occasions when these writers and writings, performing out of their spheres of influence or what we may call their self containing exclusivity, experience a brief yet not abortive spell of togetherness, underplaying the divide which keeps them apart, these occasions do or have done little to alter the existing reading practices, grounded upon such divides or treating them as their entry point into texts. (It would be interesting to note that the notion of such divides commonly marks or haunts the beginning of every reading exercise.) The feeling of being situated within a particular genre seems to overshadow even the expert reading exercises as they go on to trace

such divides, the putative indicators of genre distinction either within the imaginary centers of texts or within what seems to be their neglected sites, the foot-notes and the margins.

This is because, reading exercises throughout—within the evolving past and the “vanishing present”(Morton 140)—seems to have been guided either by the Hegelian logic, or what may be translated as his fondness for the polarized concepts of “genesis” (Howells 8) and “structure” (Howells 8), the fundamental pillars of the dwelling for the transcendental signified, or by the modern day “biopolitics”, (Durantaye 435) strategies of “inclusive exclusion” (Durantaye 222). It would be interesting to mark that the hunt for meaning, which common acts of reading initiate, ironically resemble the modern day “biopolitics”. If the bio-political strategies exclude the citizens out of the “polis” through incarceration and ostracism only to humble them into a kind of compliance, the acts of reading violate or exclude the “textualities”(Barry 65) of texts, their watery essences, in order to realize them as meaningful sites. In other words, they render texts in spatial terms so they could be grasped as texts.

Needless to say that such acts of reading end up re-enforcing the boundaries of texts, overcoming the vigorous attempt by some of the current theoretical formulations to interrogate them. (In fact, these formulations stress upon the “becoming” of texts while shunning what according to them provides an empiricist oversimplification of their performative potentialities). Though it may seem impossible in the real sense to situate these divisions within texts, as much as exposing the location of what the Lacanians call the textual unconscious—presuming that both these terms are indicators of "binaric oppositions", (Huddart 16) opposed to the "de-familiarizing" (Clark 62) essence of languages—not only plain reading exercises, but also the

current intellectual discourses of the appropriative or transformative resistance (Ashcroft 21) of the post-colonial world trace their presence within texts. However, there is a crucial difference between these two. While plain reading exercises remain naturally “positivistic” (Holub 40), for they cannot be otherwise, postcolonial discourses are firmly grounded upon an intent to make the writers and their writings key to the formulation of coherent identities. (One of the common agenda of postcolonial texts is to validate the term “postcolonial”.) In fact, for the makers of these discourses—unlike the common readers, who operate with collective hermeneutic tools, anchoring texts to what may seem to be the determining absences, the play arresting authorial interventions and other material contingencies—continuation of the war of texts is perhaps the only way to sustain identities. (The act of sustaining identities may be seen as a tangential textual exercise clearly violating the textuality of a text). The post-colonial desire for reviving coherent identities, lurking beyond the palimpsestic incoherence of one's nation's past, may seem at odds with the intellectual discourses it appropriates, those that may seem hostile to iconic presences and indifferent to the world outside texts, the corporeal con/texts of Marx, where pockets of resistance often multiply faster against the forces of dilution. (The inexorable rise in terrorist strikes against repressive state apparatuses is a case in point). But then it is this desire within postcolonial discourses that enables them to stabilize their appropriating zeal into meaningful sites of resistance, or to ensure that they transform instead of succumbing to, what they appropriate, the hegemonic intellectual formulations of the West. However, discourses grounded upon appropriation may generate ambivalence. One gets to realize this as the post-colonial discourses, which ironically problematize the hierarchical presences—the great "Oriental" (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 8) and the "Occidental" (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 60) divide for instance—with an aim to contest the colonial dogmas and their singular origin, the resilient

modernist tradition, betray their problematic orientations or what we may call their “auto-affectationism”(Howells 57)—their tendency to create a presence and disrupt it at the same time. If on the one hand they provide a self-reflexive account of their failings, their inability to provide new epistemic orientation—for instance Said’s “Orientalism” betrays its situatedness “in the very epistemology it seeks to subvert”(Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 82)—on the other they ironically operate as "potent"(Clark 151) forces, accounting for the remarkable shift in the domain of postcolonial literature, or its exponent that we triumphantly identify as Indian Writing in English, which in its current avatar seems intent upon refashioning identity and the entire pedagogic realm to which it belongs in terms of Bhabha’s deliberations in his famous essay "Dissemi-Nation: Time, Narrative and Margins of Modern Nation". Aurora’s striking vision of identity in Rushdie’s *The Moor’s Last Sigh* is often cited to indicate this shift: "Place where worlds collide, flow in and out of another, and washofy away. Place, an airman can drown in water, or else grow gills; where a water creature can get drunk, but also chokeofy, on air. Call it palimpstine"(226).

However, this shift within the domain of IWE—going by the claim that real happenings are those that not only bring about marked changes within, but outside—cannot be judged as a secluded event, but as integral to what we may call the “paradigmatic chain” (Barry 42) of events affecting each other. In other words, the essence of this shift in the domain of IWE perhaps lies in unsettling the epistemological bases of *Bhasa* writings, particularly their messianic leanings. This seems quite evident as *Bhasa* writers along with those of IWE continually betray their inclination to register the ambivalent positionings of our lives, the state of their entrenchment within the in-between-spaces, while de-centering, what one may call, their “true positivistic” (Howells 7) desire for the “return to things themselves” (Howells7). The

modernist and the postmodernist experiment within IWE and *Bhasa* is a case in point. Walter Benjamin's tribute to Marcel Proust in the beginning of Nirmal Verma's novel *The Last Wilderness* (2005), originally penned in Hindi does not have a marginal value. Like Eliot, Verma does not offer ironic treatment to fragments from other's texts. Rather the fragments from other's texts seem to provide him the incentive to begin his modernist journey against the backdrop of Himalayan foothills "where the twilight of the Empire still lingers on". However, this remarkable shift does not end up subverting these two genres, still seeming desirous for being perceived as sites for the production of cultural identity and for the continuation of the war of texts. If on the one hand IWE does not seem keen to shake off its "anxiety of Indianness" (Mukherjee 166) while negotiating or being swept over by the global influences, on the other *Bhasa* writing remains confident within contemporaneity of being the true medium of representing the essential Indian-ness of its characters. This essential "Indianness" finds true expression, according to the writers of these genres, in their representation of nation. (It is interesting to mark that with time Indian-ness has not only come to be equated with representations of India, both in the texts we write and the conversation we make, but has also become the focal point of the battle of texts or struggle for the production of cultural identity). Thus it would not be incorrect to say that the production of cultural identity or Indian-ness seems always to be contingent upon the way writers of these two genres represent India within their texts. However, the strange contest between texts and their writers to mark their presence as appropriate vehicles for depicting the real India not only results in the production of cultural identity but also work towards maintaining the dialectical play, necessary for keeping history alive. In this sense, IWE and *Bhasa* writing, with their differing/deferring claims, figure not only as contesting views, but also as elements that assist in the smooth running of dialectics, viewed

as a grand machine geared to the teleological goals of history. Thus what we view as a remarkable shift may also be seen as a kind of inevitability, an inward compulsion that enables IWE and *Bhasa* writing to lean on contesting epistemologies: while IWE, inspired by the western theoretical propositions, claim that they capture the “becoming” of India, *Bhasa* writings, grounded upon indigenous epistemological revelations—such as the enlightenment logic of the Nehurivite consensus or the raw energy of Vivekananda’s mythopoeic convictions—claim, or have been claiming, that they shelter the “being” of India. In a way the battle between such claims, between the pedagogic and the performative, or between “being” and “becoming”, mirrors the existing dialectical exercise that ensures that history progresses towards its transcendental aims.

In fact, this work on representation of nation in literary texts, paradigmatic of *Bhasa* Writing and Indian Writing in English—presuming that things remain “singular” before they are subjected to a kind of interrogation that exposes the “pluralities” inherent in them—makes an attempt to re-examine the war of texts, which the post-colonial discourses and the writers of Indian literature partake of on the grounds that it is an integral part of the larger struggle for the production of cultural identity (Spivak 126-7) and which the current theoretical formulations, such as Agamben’s notion of “inoperativity”(Murray 44)—an interesting take on the “Benjaminian model of the dialectic at a standstill” (Murray 44)—seek to end, hoping to extend an invitation to what Agamben calls the “bare life” (Zartaloudis153), a concept that renews Bhabha’s notion of the in-betweens. (If Bhabha’s “in-betweens” indicated the ambivalent nature of discourses or presences resisting subsumption within categories, Agamben’s “bare life” mirrored the radical potential of the “in-betweens”. The in-between for Agamben was a

“threshold space”(Murray 63) that validated the existence of opposites while invalidating their opposition or conflict.)

However, this re-examination of the war of texts happens to be neutral. In other words, the re-examination conducts an exhaustive survey of the stances, the postcolonial-Indian and the Western before arriving at its own conclusion, which neither tries to make way for the resistant voices of the post-colonial India, nor for the "liberatory" (Salih 8) discursive practices of the West. In other words it does not make any definitive statement about the issue of the war of texts, which the critics consider necessary for sustaining identities or better for realizing their “facticity” (Mulhal 109). Rather it is based upon the frank evaluation of the language of the chosen texts, the kind tempered by their writers to either interrogate, or maintain the war of ideological positions, yet the kind which may seem to be a “mode of disclosure, not a mode of re-presentation” (Clark 74) Such a language not only toys and rapidly transforms the positions that writers take up for sustaining the sites of struggle, but also destroys the possibility of a dialectical arrangement upon which battle of narratives rest. In this sense, this work may also seem to register the spectral presence of Agambenian thinking that rediscovers the "potentiality" ( Murray 33) of language by representing it as a "double negative," (Murray 48) something that exercises its potential to speak, but not in order to communicate. Yet this work does not interrogate from a dominant theoretical perspective. Neither is it a plain mimicry of anti-representationalist stance or a staunch opposition of Gadamer’s notion of “distanciation” (Simms 39). Rather this work resembles an anti-hegemonic exercise, a kind of bricolage that borrows *anti*-epistemic tools from Heidegger, Agamben and others—more from Heidegger and Agamben than others—to mark the potential of language. Though these thinkers may not always feature

among those having postcolonial orientation—Heidegger is well known for his fascist links—this work occasionally refers to the anti-hegemonic strands of their work, especially to their radical understanding of language, to release the authorial representations from their pre-determined location within texts, from their ideological underpinnings so they could be understood as integral to the “chain of supplementarity”(Howells 57) or the “chain of deferred mediations”(Howells 57). In other words, the focus of the work is not on the “im/potentiality” (Durantaye 23) of representation to mean, but on their potentiality to defer meanings. In this sense, this work may also be seen as partaking of the effort to cleanse Gadamer’s notion of “distanciation” of its alienating effect so it may be seen as yet another variation of the “hermeneutic circle” (Simms 42) true to life. If for Gadamer “distanciation” (Simms 41) was alienating, for it removed representations from their historical contexts or from their authors situated in these contexts, this work may be seen as understanding distanciation—removal of representations from the coordinates of space and time—as crucial for maintaining the “hermeneutic circle” (Simms 42) since the distance between the work and its author is what enables our understanding of the former.

It is equally interesting to mark the treatment that the work offers to the debate about representation of nation in IWE and *Bhasa* writing. The work does not intend to carry forward the debate or seek a resolution of the dialectical play—grounding the debate as well as the theories of nation, which seems to have influenced them—in a Hegelian or neo-Hegelian fashion. Rather it brings the dialectical play to a standstill or as the Agambenians may say, renders it “inoperative” by stressing upon the performative dimension of language. This work unfolds through three stages: broad survey, dense exploration and pithy interrogation. While the

first two stages stresses upon the open endedness of the dialectical performance, its innate capacity to run endlessly beyond history and time—something whose end is temporal, not absolute—the third stage renders it inoperative, displaying language, commonly understood as the medium to carry forward such a play, as a force of negation. Since the broad survey that the work begins with intends to capture the force of the dialectical play, with a potential to create what may be called, the semblances of a resolution, it stresses on the factors, enabling the transition to the current perspectives of nation. The survey culminates in re-locating the major shifts and continuities in the scholarly thinking about nation, necessitated by what according to Benedict Anderson were a "complex 'crossing' of discrete historical forces" (4). Similarly the dense exploration seeks to display how texts—belonging to IWE and *Bhasa*—engage in an unending contest for power and hegemony while dwelling upon the unique Indian perspective of nation, particularly its "messianic" (Royle 36) revelations, seen as a kind of rejoinder to the perspectives of the West, situated upon "the logic of presence" (Murray 30). The exploration eventually sets the ground for the Interrogation of two texts, Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004) and Buddhadeb Guha's *Kojagar* (1984) translated in English by John W. Hood as *The Bounty of the Goddess* (2004). Interrogation of these two texts stresses on the performative (Huddart 36) and the "ludic" (Royle 82) dimension of language, or what we may even term as its aporias, which not only breaks the text into multiple perspectives that perpetually remains at war with each other, but also envelops their "apocalyptic tones" (Royle 114) within an ironic smokescreen. Interrogation of textual instability in the texts of Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* and Guha's *The Bounty of the Goddess* eventually makes one realize the limitation of texts in carrying forward the battle of perspectives, the Hegelian quest for the "absolute spirit", (Beiser 57) ironically necessary not only for the maintenance and perpetuation of categories, but also,

according to some, for enhancing the neo-Hegelian sense of the evolution of societies, based upon the "theory of communicative action" (Outhwaite 38), or the logic of arriving at a consensus.

## **1.2 A View from the Top: Re-viewing the Exploratory and Interrogative Format of the Work**

This work begins by capturing three dominant positions on nation formation, which may be loosely categorized as the modernist, the ethno-symbolist and the perennialist. While the modernist's position claims that "nations and nationalisms are socio-political phenomena, characteristic of the modern era"(Triandafyllidou 177), the perennialists claim that "nations have always existed albeit in different social or political forms than that characterising modern nation"(Triandafyllidou 177). In contrast, the ethno-symbolists propose that "earlier ethnic histories constituted an essential foundation for modern nation-building"(Breuilly 15). Apart from enabling a bird's-eye view of Anderson's insights into the forces of nation formation, the modernizing processes in particular, which Anderson suspected to be crucial in nation formation, the exploration lightly touches upon the view point of Smith and Berghe, the ethno-symbolist and the perennialist, which offers a counterpoint to the modernist position by tracing the origin of nation within pre-historical sites. In other words, the uniqueness of exploration lies in the way it clearly places contradictory stances side by side, cheek by jowl, as one might say. Anderson's stress upon the constructedness of nation is juxtaposed with Smith's assertion of nations' perennial existence and with Berghe's insistence that nation had originated from primitive social configurations. In addition, the exploration affords a clear insight into the attributes that forms the essence of the modern nation, attributes such as singularity, unity and stability, only to equip

us to engage with the post-modern, or the global critique of these attributes. In fact, the purpose of the exploration, if at all it can be summed up in a line or two, is to tempt the reader to glean the modernist attributes, upon which the contemporary critique of nation rests, and which provides a scope to engage with different positions on nation formation. Furthermore, a neat juxtaposition of these two positions, modern and global, which this exploration brings about, fore-grounds what one may call the contrapuntal or dialectical arrangement of ideas. (This in fact is a kind of configuration upon which civilizations rested since their inception, and whose resuscitation, presuming that it is dead or dying within the current discourses, seems to be the objective of those disconcerted with contemporaneity's obsession with groundlessness or what Jameson calls, "sterile ground of exhausted material and overly familiar punch lines" [Jameson 362]). However, what may appear at this stage of this work as a straightforward exploration provides a sly interrogation of the vulnerability of such arrangement by exploring the unique postcolonial Indian position, a hybrid construct, opposed to the clarity of ideas necessary for contrapuntal arrangement. The hybridity of post-colonial Indian position becomes evident as the exploration yields a penetrating insight into its dependence upon, and inevitable nexus with, the positions it critiques. In fact, at this stage, apart from making the reader aware of the conflicting positions on nation's genesis, or its "structural a-prioris" (Howells 8), the exploration provokes one to realize the indebtedness of postcolonial thinking to the current Western critical formulations. The emphasis, needless to say, is on Bhabha's critique of nation, which betrays no hesitation in working by and with ambivalence. Bhabha's ambivalence, as it is depicted in this work, is not only a means of lending intellectual complexity to one's critique, but also an indicator of the deep divide in his thinking. On the one hand, his thinking reflects a post-colonial consciousness, a consciousness of being born in a nation, which has recently achieved its

freedom from the colonial rule, and of the task of the nation-building exercise that perhaps demands a collective participation from the people of that nation. On the other, it reflects a consciousness of his location in the Western intellectual climate and the influence that this climate had, and is having on, his intellectual sensibilities. It is this ambivalence in his thinking as much as his indebtedness to Derridian thinking, his fine mimicry of the principle of continuous deferral, which perhaps makes him collapse the distinction between the pedagogic and the performative aspects of the nation, while restraining him from dismissing nation as a unified category: "I don't think we can eliminate the concept of nation all together, at a time when in many parts of the world . . . people are living and dying for that form of the society. You cannot completely do away with nation as an idea, or as a political structure, but you can acknowledge its historical limitations of our time" (Huddart 117).

However, one gets to realize the scope of the exploration as it shifts from affording an insight into Bhabha's ambivalent position to his interrogation of what Anderson had put forward as the putative indicators of imagining nation. Speaking as he does from a position of a post-colonial critic, if not from an inferior position of a third-worldist, Bhabha displays a mild restraint in opposing Anderson's view that nation is constituted by its borders, and that the sense of these borders is integral to every conversation we make about nation. Though Bhabha's critique may be seen as a forceful reminder of the self division inherent in nation understood by Anderson in terms of a sociological organism, it does not display the urgency to interpret cultural difference "as the free play of polarities and pluralities in the homogeneous empty time of the nation community" (Bhabha, *Location* 162). However, while displaying the restraint with which Bhabha critiques Anderson, the exploration does not fail to register the respectful distance

that the former maintains from the latter in his thinking. In fact, as the exploration reveals, Bhabha's critique takes Anderson's thinking about nation as its starting point while aiming to expose the loopholes in it. For Anderson, nation was a virtual community with an air of a-historical permanence, though while stressing upon nation's virtuality and a-historicity Anderson had acknowledged that nation was historically specific and relatively recent: "If nation states are widely conceded to be new and historical, the nation to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past, and still more important, glide into a limitless future"(Huddart 105). Interestingly, Bhabha rephrases Anderson's words while emphasizing the connection between nation and narration: "Nation like narratives, lose their origin in the myths of time and fully realize their horizon in the mind's eye" (Bhabha, *Nation* 1).

Bhabha does not altogether reject Anderson's notion of "simultaneity" (24), though unlike the latter he does not find it deterministic, innate to our imagination of nation. The former takes cognizance of the "Blitz spirit" (Huddart 106) that unifies people during testing historical moments, lending them an insight to realize the unitary essence of their nation, but at the same time he stresses upon the exclusivity of such insights. In other words, Bhabha's critique turns its attention to those who do not partake of Anderson's simultaneity or the Blitz spirit of the testing historical moments. As David Huddart says, Bhabha's work constantly "seeks to undermine the complacent and pernicious insistence on simultaneity that tends to exclude those who do not fit" (106).

The second round of exploration provides a penetrating insight into the issue of representation of nation, the eye of the storm, which divides *Bhasa* writers and Indian writers in English into two camps hostile to each other. Apart from such an insight that enables us to locate

the origin of the issue of representation of nation within literary texts in the complex intersection of socio-cultural, historical and political forces, the exploration provides a view of the major shifts in the way this polemical issue was addressed within, and mirrored by, the texts of IWE and *Bhasa* at different points of time. If during the period of colonial rule the writers from these two conflicting categories enjoyed a brief spell of togetherness by churning out texts that regenerated a common desire for a unified nation, in the postcolonial phase these writers drifted apart due to their affinity for languages soaked with, and bred upon, different ideological positions. Exploration, at this juncture, not only enables us to re-view the conflict between the IWE and *Bhasa* writers over the issue of representation of nation in their texts as a fall-out of the on-going struggle for the production of cultural identity, but also enables a view of the ideological position involved in this struggle. Partha Chatterjee's stress upon the "inner domain" (6), a spiritual domain starkly opposed to material plane in which the Westerners are still supposed to exist, explains the necessity of carrying forward this struggle from an ideological position. Opposing "Manichean categories" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 8), the binaric constructions of the narratives of nationalist resistance, Partha Chatterjee's "inner domain" (6) offers new ways of viewing the post-colonial ontology as a collective unit while enabling us to experience the unifying potential of his domain, its power to hold and draw people into its orbit. However, this exploration does not provide penetrating insight into the ways Edward Said's resolution of the powerful binary, the resilient occidental and the oriental divide, could be distinguished from Chatterjee's attempt to distance himself from the Manichean oppositions. But then, it may be treated as an occasion to recollect that while Said's reconstruction of history took place within and from the dominant intellectual paradigm of the West, Chatterjee devised a unique Indian way of understanding history, one that was mythopoeic, unlike the former that

was guided by logic and Western ratiocination. A reference to Chatterjee at this point would enable us to grasp the distinctive nature of his thinking, respectfully distancing it from Said:

The material is the domain of the “outside” . . . a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. The spiritual, on the other hand is an “inner” domain bearing the essential marks of cultural identity. The greater one’s success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one’s spiritual culture. (Chatterjee 6)

The second part of the objective, which is the interrogation of the two texts, paradigmatic of IWE and *Bhasa*, not only problematizes the hierarchical distinction between them by poring over their overlapping boundaries, but also displays how language, the kind used in literary texts, toys with representations made from ideological positions. While problematizing makes way for the renewal of the two texts, the disclosure of language as a potential force, with a capacity to tinker with whatever we choose to represent through it, leads us to re-evaluate its position as a medium of representation. In other words, while problematization of textual borders enable us to see texts as unfinished pieces of writing—with no beginning or end in the real sense, apart from the ones we impose on them in order to conceive them as objects with spatial dimension—the disclosive potential of the interrogation lies in exposing the real nature of language, enabling and transcending every conceptual sphere in which we try to imprison it.

Apart from initiating new ways of engaging with the languages of texts and the representations that writers attempt to make through them, interrogation brings about a new turn, unanticipated and at odds with the work’s tone and temper till the end. One may even call this

turn, Heideggerian. Opposed to the traditional way of viewing texts and their language, the new turn sets the ground for realizing them, not as anchoring machines fastened to the ideological goals of a writer, but as entities true to life where change is permanent and boundaries are mythical. One may quote a few lines from Heidegger's *Contributions* not for the sake of infusing the work with intellectual complexity but for forcefully indicating that the debate about the representation of nation in literary texts shall inevitably lead one to ponder over the nature of language, or as one may say, its triumphs and failures: "The word fails, not as an occasional event, but originarily i.e. it is language as a whole that fails, not just the lack of a specific word. The word does not even come to a word, even though it is precisely when the word escapes one that the word begins to take its first leap" (Clark 89).

In fact, we realize the scope of interrogation as it indicates serious overlaps between the two texts cut out to realize nation, and its exponents, nationhood and nationality from two different ideological positions. While Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* contains its own counterpoint, the desire for a unified nation in contrast to what we may call its official interpretation, which identifies Ghosh's text as of a kind celebrating the redundancy of nation, the *Bhasa* text *The Bounty of the Goddess* conforms to the Indian ethos of fixity and rootedness only to succumb to the postmodern ideas of fluidity and multiplicity by repeatedly problematizing the essentialist categories of nation and identity in its narrative. The indication of such serious overlaps and the play of multiple perspectives within the body of a single text eventually leads one to realize the open-endedness of texts unable to hold on to an absolute perspective and simultaneously oppose the tendency of reductionist reading and the battle of ideological perspectives it entails.

Though it may not be possible to capture the essence of this study in manner that would exactly convey what this study does, one may say at the end that it, not only problematizes the concept of rigid binary opposition between the IWE and *Bhasa* Writing by identifying the overlaps between the two texts chosen for interrogation, but also marks the futility of the debate about the representation of nation by opposing the tendency of reductionist reading of texts, the basis of this debate, or any debate for that matter. The study sets the stage for reading texts as brilliant pieces of writing that provokes an uncontrollable, or what one may call an inscrutable play of language rather than as narratives, where perspectives are, or may be, secured for the political causes. It would not be incorrect, if one says that the study, which begins by exploring the debate about representation of nation within literary texts and the different ideological positions, which seem to have inspired them, ends with the realization that politics or ideologies cannot successfully make inroads into literature. Language ultimately does not allow the politicization of literature to take place by choosing to speak in an idiom different than the one set by the writer, writing from a political position or a bias. Though politics of writing, or what may be translated as, our tendency to inscribe words with ideology, remains a permanent feature of our lives, something that we cloyingly adhere to, and wantonly display, during occasions of defending our subsumption within categories or speaking for our rights in this unequal world, we nevertheless end up experiencing the triumph of writing and failure of politics. However justified one's adherence to political position, or ideological biases may be, the translation of that position in language remains vulnerable to radical alteration. But then, the deconstructive glare that can reveal such alterations is rare. In a way, this work provides that glare not only with the intention of interrogating the politics of writing, but also for securing writing at the expense of politics, which seems to have imprisoned the latter for its own goals.

### 1.3 Literature Review

Any fresh interrogation of the debate of representation of nation in Indian Writing in English and *Bhasa* writing has to be guided by and erected upon the corpus of critical writings on this debate or the problematic relationship between these two genres of writing. As the problem is fairly new not much work is available to address the issue. Therefore an attempt has been made here to briefly review a few important works in this regard. The works are discussed in a chronological order.

It starts with Meenakshi Mukherjee's *The Perishable Empire: Essays on Indian Writing in English* (2000) the vital pillar of the current study, linking the troubled association of IWE and *Bhasa* writing with the problematic of nationhood. She explores the connection among the different ideas of nation, as they grow out of different fields of novels and languages. While discussing about problems and difficulties faced by both these genres, Mukherjee stresses on the production of cultural and political identity, the most potent site of struggle between IWE and *Bhasa* Writing. She also explores the cultural and pedagogic imbalance between these two groups of writing when it comes to acknowledging their role as the "real" representatives of India as a nation.

Tabish Khair's *Babu Fiction: Alienation in Contemporary Indian English Novels* is equally important in this context. It examines the position of Indian English fictions in the context of its sociological and literary alienation, alienation from the common people of India and from the native intelligentsia writing in their mother tongue. This book foregrounds the contradictory narration of India and the Indians through the narratives of IWE and *Bhasa* writing in the terms of the rigid Babu-Coolie binary.

Reference could be made to Amit Chaudhury's *The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature* (2001) which while contesting Salman Rushdie's assertion about the superiority of IWE and its claim of being sole representative of Indian literary scenario in the last fifty years, asserts that when it comes to representing India, IWE has displayed an urge unequalled by its counterpart. But then, he refers to highly significant yet relatively lesser known writers from regional background, those who have represented India with an ardor or an understanding unmatched by its counterpart.

Even Makarand Paranjape, a well known academician, elaborates on the problematic of linguistic trappings manifested in the representation of India through the narratives of IWE and its "contrary" texts of *Bhasa* writings in his two related articles "Vernacularizing the Master Tongue: Indian English and its Con-texts"(2005) and "Indian English and its Con-texts: Representing India in our Time"(2005) Paranjape voices his strongly held belief that the representation of Indian realities are bound to be different in different languages. He links the contested issue of "Indianness" of the Indian literature penned in different languages, especially in English, with the larger contexts of representation of India and its self-apprehension to make his point. Paranjape suggests that IWE should be read side by side with *Bhasa* writing in order to know the contrasting portrayals of India in their narratives. In the two above mentioned articles as well as in a third article named "Common Myths and Misconceptions about Indian English Literature" published in *Rethinking Indian English literature* (2000) Paranjape opposes the prevalent notion that IWE is the best among the entire gamut of Indian literature. Contradicting the contentions of foreignness of IWE as compared to its counterpart, the *Bhasa* writing, Paranjape opines that in order to get a clear understanding of the position of IWE vis-à-vis

*Bhasa* writing and to perceive the Indianness of Indian Literature as a whole, one needs to read the texts of both the genres together without any sense of hierarchal distinctions between them.

M K Naik in his book *A Critical Harvest: Essays and Studies* (2005) laments the prejudices of superiority in both IWE and *Bhasa* camps regarding their representation of India as a nation while maintaining that these two camps are not necessarily “rivals” but “brothers”. M.K Naik in his work “Indian Pride and Indian Prejudice: Reflections on the relationship between Regional Indian Literatures and Indian Writing in English”(2003) had suggested that a comparison be made between a particular *Bhasa text* and a text of IWE in an attempt to eradicate the residual misconception of the rigid binaric opposition between them, a misconception found to be active during representing the “real” India in their narratives. In fact, he has struck a comparison between Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* and N.S.Phadke’s Marathi novel *Zanzavat* to find that the former is an utterly realistic picture of freedom struggle and the latter is a predominantly romantic love story. However, he immediately warns the reader against generalizing the result and nurturing any bias in this context.

Eventually, it was our telephonic conversation with renowned Tamil novelist Ashokamitran in July 2008 which provided the research with a solid back bone, voicing as it did, the outlook of a large number of writers writing in Indian *Bhasas* whom he aptly represented. While being asked about representing India as a nation in his texts or in the texts of other *Bhasa* writers, he strongly opined that the *Bhasa* writers did not make any conscious attempt to represent nation or address the issue of nationhood directly, for Nation was automatically and spontaneously there in their writing because they were writing from within, or what we may call Chatterjee’s inner domain. Unlike the Indian Writing in English, there was no urge to interrogate the concept of a holistic approach towards nation in the writings in different *Bhasas*. In fact, he

negated the idea that *Bhasa* writers only speak for their province and not for the whole India by stating that any province of India was itself *India* anyway.

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