

## STUDY ON SHASHI THAROOR'S FICTION AND POLITICS



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*M.Phil., Roll No. :140747; Session: 2014-15*

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#### ABSTRACT

Shashi Tharoor is an Indian former international civil servant, diplomat, bureaucrat, and politician, as well as a writer and public intellectual. He was born on March 9, 1956 in London, England, and he has been serving as the Member of Parliament for the constituency of Thiruvananthapuram in the state of Kerala since 2009. He is the current head of the Standing Committee on Chemicals and Fertilizers, where he has served for many years. Formerly holding the position of Under-Secretary General of the United Nations, he attempted to run for the position of Secretary-General in 2006 but was ultimately unsuccessful. He was once the

Chairman of both the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Informational Technology before becoming the Founder-Chairman of the All India Professionals Congress. Tharoor was born in London, United Kingdom, but he spent his childhood in India. He received his undergraduate degree from St. Stephen's College in Delhi in 1975 and his doctorate in International Relations and Affairs from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in 1978. Tharoor worked all over the world after completing his education. He received this honor from the Fletcher School when he was just 22 years old, making him the youngest person to ever do so at the time.

Tharoor worked as an official with the United Nations from 1978 to 2007, during which time he rose through the ranks to become the Under-Secretary General for Communications and Public Information in

2001. After coming in second place in the election for U.N. Secretary-General in 2006 to Ban Ki-moon, he made the decision to resign and announced his decision.

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**KEYWORDS;** Public Information, Parliamentary Standing Committee, Informational technology.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2009, Tharoor started his career in politics by becoming a member of the Indian National Congress. He went on to successfully represent the party in the Lok Sabha elections from his home district of Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, and was elected three times to the position of member of parliament. Tharoor held the position of Minister of State for External Affairs under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government, which was led by the Congress party. Before Narendra Modi surpassed him, Shashi Tharoor was the most followed Indian on Twitter due to the widespread acclaim that he received for his fluency in the English language.

Since 1981, Tharoor has produced a large number of books, both fiction and non-fiction, that are focused on India and its history, culture, film, politics, society, and foreign policy, as well as other topics that are relevant to India. He was awarded the Sahitya Academy Award for his writing. He has authored columns and pieces that have been published in almost all of the major magazines in India and throughout the world. Tharoor, who was not a devoted supporter of the Gandhi family, was soundly beaten by Mallikarjun Kharge in the race for the presidency of the party.

On March 9, 1956 Shashi Tharoor was born in London, United Kingdom to Malayali parents Chandran Tharoor and Sulekha Menon. Both of his parents were originally from Palakkad, which is located in the state of Kerala. Shobha and Smitha are the names of Tharoor's two younger sisters. Chippukutty Nair was Shashi's maternal grandpa. Shashi's paternal grandfather was named Nair. Uncle Parameshwaran Tharoor, who established Reader's Digest in India, is Shashi's paternal grandfather's brother. Tharoor's father was born in Kerala and spent the most of his working life in numerous cities across India, including London, Bombay, Calcutta, and

Delhi. He spent 25 of those years working for The Statesman, ultimately rising to the post of group advertising manager. Tharoor's parents moved the family back to India when he was just two years old. He began his formal education in 1962 at the Montfort School in Yercaud. Later, he relocated to Bombay (now known as Mumbai) and attended the Campion School there (1963–68). He attended the St. Xavier's Collegiate School in Kolkata during his senior year of high school (1969–71).

### REVIEW LITERATURE

John Skinner 16 (2003) In a series of three works of fiction, Shashi Tharoor has distinguished himself by subverting a number of the paradigms typically associated with postcolonial writing or the New Literatures in English. These works also go beyond the confines of the traditional realist novel. Shashi Tharoor is a remarkable author. While he owes a literary debt to Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, his first book, *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), may also be the most virtuosic reworking of an epic model - in this case, the Mahabharata - ever created in English. This is because the Mahabharata was the blueprint for the story. In addition to being a humorous satire of the Bollywood film business, his second novel, "Show Business," which was published in 1991, is also a more biting criticism of the corruption that is prevalent in Indian public life. A study of an East-West cultural conflict, *Riot* (2001) is set against the backdrop of the sectarian unrest that followed the destruction of the Ayodhya mosque in 1992. The film was released in the United States. An attempt is made to locate the author within cultural and literary contexts through the use of brief analyses of all three of the author's works. Tharoor's personal position, on the other hand, is more overtly stated than that of the majority of current writers. His influential collection of essays titled *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* (1997) is read in close connection with his novels since it clearly articulates a social and political worldview. This book is consequently considered to be of equal importance.

Dr Ajay Kumar Sharma Dr Jitendra Kumar (December 2015) This work can be divided into three parts; the first part presents Tharoor's insight in the backdrop of the Indira era; he examines Mrs. Indira Gandhi's antecedents: Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri. The second part analyses India's foreign policy during 1966-1977 under the rule of Indira Gandhi. She is carrying on their legacy by continuing their approach to India's foreign policy, which she has inherited from them. In the second chapter, Tharoor investigates, analyses, and assesses the foreign policy that was pursued by Indira Gandhi. In addition, he investigates the roles that the opposition and the Ministry of External Affairs play in the process of formulating India's

foreign policy. In the third and last section, he investigates the reactions, including the pressure of public opinion, interest groups, and the press.

Dr. Ambreen SafderKharbe 3, March 2016, Conflicts in history, politics, religion, and culture have always been a topic of discussion from the beginning of time, and authors do a good job of portraying these topics as the moral obligations of their characters. The novel Riot written by Shashi Tharoor is intellectually stimulating, beautifully written, and emotionally engaging. The historical occurrence of a love-hate relationship between the two most prominent populations in India (Hindu and Muslim) was the inspiration for this work. The study demonstrates how dangerous the concept of "unity in variety" can be, as well as how political parties may transform minor concerns into community riots for their own personal gain. The paper, which is set against the backdrop of such a significant crisis, also focuses on the East-West encounter through the eyes of two lovers, as well as the cultural difficulties between two nations and two religions.

BHAVESH D. PARMAR 7, September2013 The focus of this research is on how the author Shashi Tharoor depicts Indian culture in his works of fiction. His three acclaimed works, including The Great Indian Novel, Show Business, and Riot: A Love Story, are included in this collection of his work. Mr. Tharoor has contributed a new dimension by utilising a literary tradition closely associated with Indian lives, as well as a language and literary style that may connect anybody to the canon of written works. There is a noticeable element of Indianness in all of his works, whether the focus of the piece is a study of concepts and ideas related to Indianness, or vice versa. The majority of his literary works are based on various aspects of Indian culture, and you may recognise them by the label INDO-NOSTALGIC. In this article, I have made a straightforward effort to imitate Indian culture by including the aforementioned three books.

### **HISTORIC REPRESENTATION IN SHASHI THAROOR'S FICTION**

In the last chapter, we spoke about how Rushdie tried to depict the history of the Indian Subcontinent in his novels *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*. This chapter examines Tharoor's attempt to thematize Indian history in two of his books, notably *Riot* and *The Great Indian Novel*. Both of these books use a fictionalised approach to retelling the history of India. The interest of postcolonial authors to evaluate historical events inside their works is mirrored in the author's efforts to convey history in his novels. In this chapter, we will talk about Tharoor's

attempt to evaluate the history of India throughout the twentieth century, as well as his criticism of the Western paradigms of history, fiction, and historiography in both of his books.

### **SHASHI THAROOR: A BIOGRAPHICAL AND SOCIO-LITERARY PERSPECTIVE**

In his novels, Shashi Tharoor, a prolific Indian writer and a former ambassador for the United Nations, has captured the history of India as well as the shifting reality of Indian social life. His paintings explore the concept of 'matter of India' by rewriting India's history and reinterpreting it in a variety of different ways. India serves as the inspiration for all of his artistic endeavours. In consideration of his own work, Tharoor has the following to say: "...my fiction aims to recapture my country's legacy for itself, to tell, in an Indian voice, a tale of India" (BIB 25). Additionally, he has mentioned it elsewhere "I am a student of history, and because of this, I am interested in the documentation of historical events. My work is... conscientious of the many different ways in which history may be recounted and preserved " (Chakarvartin.pag). His writings focus on India's history, as well as its present and future. His efforts to get more familiar with the history, traditions, and culture of his nation are reflective of the pride one has in their own culture and history.

### **MYTH, HISTORY AND POLITICS IN THE GREAT INDIAN NOVEL: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE**

"Emblematizes the obsession with re-viewing history that obtains in Post-colonial works," according to Tharoor's efforts to convey the history of India in his fiction (Salat 127). Under a legendary garb, the history of the time period of the Indian liberation fight and the first three decades after independence is retold in The Great Indian Novel. While doing so, The Great Indian Novel "rejects some old assumptions, derived as much from the colonial image of India as from our own naively accepted versions of our past." This is done while it is tracing the history of India during the twentieth century (BIB 23).

Rewriting India in the 20th century via the lens of satire and parody, Tharoor's The Ancient Indian Novel is based on the framework of the great Hindu epic, the Mahabharata. The tale of the Mahabharata is often used to retell the history of British colonial India as well as India's following history after independence and up to 1980. The purpose of the retelling is to "examine what has formed India and almost unmade it, and to analyse the nature of truth in reality as in fiction, in tradition as in history," as stated in the book (BIB 23). At the same time,

"opposes Imperial history and depicts the tale of India's colonisation from a perspective that decentres the colonisers and foregrounds Indians and Indian systems," is how *The Great Indian Novel* is described (Tiffin qtd. in Shah 101).

### **Problematizing Pre-Independence History of India In the Great Indian Novel**

*The Great Indian Novel* by Tharoor challenges European accounts of Indian history, which portray the country as backward and devoid of concepts such as history, education, science, nationalism, and justice, among other things. In the historical records that were kept in Europe about India, the British claimed that they were the ones who brought illumination to the subcontinent. These depictions have ideological underpinnings and significance. There is no such thing as a discursive technique that is devoid of ideological meaning. Theorists such as Roland Barthes, Michael Foucault, and Jacques Derrida, among others, have drawn attention to the ideological repercussions that might result from the use of language. It "must always be a political and ideological act," and as a result, "it is inextricably tied with the institutions of power and control" (Salat 131-132). The European records of Indian history were produced, and in some cases even falsified, by the colonists in order to legitimise their presence and the harsh policies they implemented (Mishra 14). T

he narrative challenges the colonial interpretation of history, which portrays India as a nation devoid of historical significance and modern advancement. V.V. expresses his concern about the misrepresentations right at the beginning of the story by saying, "They tell me India is an undeveloped country." They lecture at conferences, make appearances on television, and even make the trip to meet me, all the while cradling moulded plastic briefcases and wearing suits that cost eight hundred rupees, all in an effort to proclaim, with an air of profound comprehension, that India has not yet developed... I inform them that not only do they not know anything about history, but much less about their own background.

### **Problematizing Postcolonial Issues in the Great Indian Novel**

"The narrative of life, Ganapathi, does not have a conclusion," in other words. There are only lulls in the action. The teller has complete creative control over the conclusion, but there is no assurance that his decision will be irreversible. After all, the conclusion of today is only the start of tomorrow (TGIN 163). The partitioning of India was not the end. In reality, it was merely a brief intermission in the narrative of Indian history. The day that India became an

independent nation, August 15, 1947, marked the beginning of a new era in the country's long and eventful history. "India has been born and reborn dozens of times, and it will be reborn again." India will exist forever, and it will continue to evolve in perpetuity (TGIN 245). The transformation into the new India was being described as "cathartic" and "regenerative" (TGIN 248). This process of regeneration is never an easy one to go through.

### **The Great Indian Novel: A Critique Of Western Paradigms**

Not only does Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* recount the history of India in the voice of the Indian people, but it "also provides a postcolonial challenge to the western paradigms of fiction writing, and historiography" (Shah 101). Tharoor harkens back to an older storytelling tradition of the country by using a narrator to communicate his story to his amanuensis. V.V. not only narrates his interpretation of the history of India, but he also takes some time in the middle of each chapter to digress and think on the nature of historical discourses and the writing process. The fact that the story is self-reflective draws attention to the manufactured character of historical narratives. While he is narrating his memoir, he frequently interrupts himself to address Ganapathi and discuss the sequence of events and the process of writing history, both of which contribute to a feeling of dis familiarization.

### **REWRITING OF POST-INDEPENDENCE HISTORY: A PERSPECTIVE OF RIOT: A NOVEL**

*Riot* is a book written by Shashi Tharoor that narrates the mystery surrounding the murder of Priscilla Hart against the backdrop of post-independent India, which was ripped apart by riots and the Babri Masjid atrocity. Zalilgarh is a tiny town in Uttar Pradesh, and it is the destination of a visit by an American PhD student who is also a volunteer for the population control group Help-US. She goes there with the intention of assisting the women who live in Zalilgarh. The novel is mostly driven forward by the events surrounding her untimely death in the midst of the uprising. The murder mystery serves as the central focus of this story, which also explores a variety of other topics, including love, hatred, cultural collision, social strife, misuse of power, fanaticism, and the inaccessibility of the truth.

The novel offers an in-depth investigation of the ways in which communal waste has impacted the social fabric of the nation ever since independence. Tharoor himself makes the following assertion: The themes that concern me in the novel are love and hate; cultural collision, in



particular, in this case the Hindu/Muslim collision, the American/Indian collision, and within India the collision between the English-educated elites of India and people in the rural heartland; as well as, issues of the unknowability of history, the way in which identities are constructed through an imagining of history; and perhaps most importantly, the unknowability of time. (qtd. in Dhir 34)

### **USE OF POLITICS AND FANTASY IN SHOW BUSINESS**

Show Business is a work of fiction written by Shashi Tharoor that reimagines Bollywood and the life story of the superstar Ashok Banjara. In order to achieve this goal, he employs the rhetorical strategies of parody, satire, humour, and irony. The novel not only makes the audience laugh, but it also makes them think deeply about the movie business. Bollywood has always maintained a strong connection to the people of India. It is the embodiment of Indian society in all of its facets: politics, history, culture, customs, and traditions. According to what Sukhdev Sandhu has written: "...Bollywood movies, much like other movies, are entertainment. In addition, they are concerned with matters of history, aesthetics, and politics..." (Sandhu) Many films have been created in Bollywood on the glitz and glitter of its stars. These tales have been told for so long that many people in India believe them without ever considering whether or not they are true.

In his book *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, M.H. Abrams provides the following explanation of the Greek idea of myth: "Mythos" was the name for any kind of narrative or storyline in traditional Greek, regardless of whether it was real or made up (Abrams). "something that many people think but does not exist or is incorrect," according to the definition provided by the Oxford English Dictionary. When these criteria are taken into consideration, it is possible to assert that popular Hindi film is responsible for the creation of many modern misconceptions regarding the allure of Bollywood and the present Indian culture. Film heroes are accorded the same level of reverence as gods in the community, and this regard is very high. Candia McWilliam, in a review of a book, expresses the same viewpoints as previously mentioned: 102...In India, cinema is imbued with a mystical quality, and the actors who play the lead roles are considered to be demi-gods. Frequently including religious themes and exhibited to large audiences.

Often on large outside screens that shimmer like apparitions above an enthralled throng crouched down in the street, Hindi ' flicks are the incarnate aspirations of millions of the poorest people on earth. Their stars are some of the richest, most renowned, and consequently most



powerful, persons in India...." (Mc William) Tharoor has made an attempt to refute these misconceptions in this work by bringing light on the facts of this sector which many times stays unreported. The reading of the novel is an eye opening experience for individuals who so naively trust in the willing suspension of disbelief afforded by cinema. The cinema provides a fantasy world for the people. Their unsatisfied and unconscious needs get realised there. Sometimes the regular folks picture themselves replacing the heroes of the movie. It is all the part of a planet they do not have an access to. Nanda Kumar is of the view that: ...At the same time, the average Indian is fatally attracted to and often motivated by the world of films; his impossible dreams and unattainable ambitions find a vicarious fulfilment in celluloid; thus the major part of his mental life is coloured and occupied by a pseudo-world of make-believe. From this perspective nothing looks more essential to the Indian mentality than the movie...." (Kumar) 103 Tharoor challenges the deception, artificiality and decomm of the iconic and godlike personalities of the Indian masses.

## CONCLUSION

Shashi Tharoor has focused mostly on textual analysis and sarcastic commentary throughout his review of *The Great Indian Novel*. There is no risk of satire being extinct as a kind of literature; in James Sultherland's *English Satire*, for example, the author discusses how satire is timeless and how the only thing that changes is how it is used. He emphasises that satire is not an extinct dinosaur or pterodactyl, row of yellow bones in the literary Museum, but rather a living and vibrant genre that has still has an important place to play in the literature of the twenty-first century. Even if the humorist is unable to save us, he can at least urge us to keep fighting and not give up without a fight. In addition, he can and does let a stream of fresh air to enter, which fills our lungs and keeps our blood circulating. (Sutherland, paragraph 22) It has been demonstrated that satire may be utilised for a variety of outcomes while narrating. In his role as a satirist, Tharoor is often considered a moralist since he investigates questions of good and evil by analysing the ways in which various characters react to various challenges in life.

The current work demonstrates an artistic and critical sense that is necessary to convey Indianness in novel writing. The pupils are provided with the opportunity to acquire knowledge regarding the illuminating and encouraging history of India. It demonstrates Shashi Tharoor's learnedness as a writer by extracting his remarkable features and characteristics as well as the use of Indian elements in novel writing. In addition, it demonstrates the usage of Indian aspects

in novel writing. It is a creative endeavour to find out what it means to be Indian from a variety of angles, such as the topic, characters, usage of Indian history and culture, use of mythology, method of storytelling, and literary techniques in books such as *The Great Indian Novel*, *Show Business*, and *Riot*. In one of the interviews, Shashi Tharoor stated that "India has changed and keeps on changing, therefore whatever answers I give you now would be out of date in a year or two." [Since India has changed and continues to evolve]

The theme of hypocrisy runs throughout the book. Things like cheating on your spouse, having extramarital affairs, losing a loved one, etc. Tharoor has painted a picture of the widespread corruption that exists in humanitarian organisations. Tharoor has made light of the fact that certain classified aid organisations prey on orphans. Tharoor has also provided commentary on the premarital and extramarital love encounters that are depicted in the stories in this book. He has engaged in the adulterous behaviour of a great number of housewives. Tharoor has discussed how so-called respectable men and women continue to have sexual relationships outside of their marriages despite the fact that they are married. Not only has Tharoor debunked the idea of the faithful wife, but she has also launched an assault on the institution of marriage. As extramarital relationships have become increasingly widespread, the institution of marriage has lost some of its sanctity.

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