



The reflection of Indianness in Shashi Tharoor's work

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Abstract:

The present work is about the reflection of Indianness in the novels of Shashi Tharoor. The work includes his three valuable novels such as The Great Indian Novel, Show Business and Riot- A love story. Mr. Tharoor has added a new flavor having both a literary tradition related to Indian lives, of using a language & literary form that link anyone to the literature. There is the distinctive quality of Indianness in all his works, be its theme, explorations of thoughts & ideas of Indianness. Most of his literary creations are centered on Indian themes and they are marked with the phrase INDO-NOSTALGIC. Here, I have made a simple attempt to mirror Indianness including the above mentioned three novels.

Keywords: Bharata, "India, Indianness, Indo-Nostalgic, Pungent satire, Riot

1. Introduction

Indian English literature after 1960 especially, neither incorporates nor does it really indulge Romanticization of India. It has become mature enough to write about our own needs, successes, ambitions, aspirations and even our own failures. Indian English Literature today examines Indian society, culture and religion with brutal frankness. Now a day, English has not only been a medium of communication for Indians but has also achieved excellence in creative writing. They have changed the face of India as said by Shashi Tharoor in one of his interviews, "India is not, as people keep calling it, an underdeveloped country, but rather, in the context of its history and cultural heritage, a highly developed one."⁽¹⁾

2. Glimpse of Tharoor's Qualities Presenting Indianness

Shashi Tharoor, an Indian voice which sounds the theme of Indianness. He has travelled wildly by being NRI as well as previously UNO secretary. As a result, he has got a multi-cultural experience. He vanquishes the idea that more than collision of cultures, it should be the global interaction that should forge the path for human happiness. Tharoor endeavors to chronicle multi-dimensional facets of Indian culture and society in all his writing. In fact, his writing is a cultural product so having greater value for the readers, proving the quote,

"Indianness lies more in the soul of the country than in its body and the soul of the country lies in its thoughts, aesthetics, philosophy, science and technology, it's way of living in entirety and totality, in a word, it's entire culture from the ancient time to the present day."⁽²⁾

3. Indianness in the Great Indian Novel

The Great Indian Novel published in 1989, is a political satire which interprets The Mahabharata as India's modern history. This novel uses the theme of great Hindu epic, the epic of Hindu mythology. All the characters are recast and reset in the context of the Indian Independence Movement and first three decades of post independence. Figures from Indian history are

transformed into characters from mythology and the mythical story of India is retold as a history of Indian Independence.

The Mahabharata is an epic tale describing the historical dynastic struggle over the throne of the kingdom of Hastinapur between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, two branches of the heirs of the king Shantanu. In this novel, Tharoor recasts the story of the nascent Indian democracy as a struggle between groups and individuals closely related by their personal and political histories. Through his cantankerous narrator, Tharoor takes an irreverent tone towards figures such as Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, who are ordinarily treated with reverence by Indians. The phrase "Great Indian novel" is an allusion to the long-standing idea of the "Great American Novel" and is also a pun, roughly translating "Mahabharata" (maha "great"; Bharata "India"). The Mahabharata, which is not a novel but an epic poem, can be understood, according to Tharoor, to represent Hinduism's greatest literary achievement and thus serves as an appropriate paradigm in which to frame a retelling of recent Indian history. A significant characteristic of Tharoor's version of the story is the emphasis on the older generations (e.g., Bhishma, Dhritarashtra, and Pandu) and the resulting de-emphasis on the actions of the Kauravas and the Pandavas.

4. Indianness in Show Business

Tharoor's second novel, *Show Business*, is a pungent satire on the Bombay film industry, which came out in 1992. The book was subsequently adapted into a motion picture called *Bollywood*. The narrative follows the career of a famous film-star Ashok Banjara, from the period when the struggling actor tried to find a foothold in the film world to the time when he fought for survival after a fatal accident in a shooting zone. The character of Banjara is modeled on Amitabh Bachchan whose life closely parallels that of the fictional hero. As a backdrop to Banjara's rise to the acme of Bombay's commercial cinema is a non-stop carousel of the major blockbusters he has acted in- 'a never ending fantasy that took over his life completely and transformed it into an astonishing, though compelling, lie. Tharoor uses film, which he considers to be an important medium for transmitting fictional experience to the Indian masses, as a creative metaphor to explore the contemporary myths which are invented by the popular Hindi cinema and, through them, certain aspects of Indian life. Though a montage film narrative, shooting scripts, songs and monologues, he invents a fictional world that becomes an expressive metaphor for deeper truths: illusion and reality, ambition and greed, love, deception and death.

Show Business is a rollicking novel about the razzle – dazzle of Hindi movie industry known as "Bollywood". The book is the evidence & raises Tharoor's reputation as one of India's most important voices & a writer of world status. Here, Tharoor portrays the world of Bollywood with glimpses of Hollywood like glamour, egos & double standards. Tharoor has nicely combined the different aspects of film industry with reality like power of privilege, seduction, betrayal, politics & intrigues that makes the whole story colorful, entertaining & deadly serious. New York Times reviews on the book as, "Exuberant and clever both affectionately and fiercely done."

5. Indianness in Riot-A Love Story

Riot - A love story published in 2001 is a powerful novel set in & around a riot in India in 1989 about love hate, cultural collision, religious fanaticism, the ownership of history & the impossibility of knowing the truth. It is the question and mystery who killed Priscilla Hart having the age of twenty four. She was a highly motivated, idealistic American student who had come to India as a volunteer in women's health programme. Like Tharoor's novels, thus novel is experimenting masterfully with narrative form, he chronicles the mystery of Priscilla hart's death

through the often contradictory accounts of a dozen or more characters, all of whom relate their own versions of event surrounding her killing.

A vibrant work of fiction about the communal flare-up in northern India in the wake of Ram Janambhumi movement by Hindu extremists in late 1980s and early 1990s, the book takes on a wide range of topics. On one level, Tharoor examines the reasons of communal tension between Hindus and Muslims through the postmortem of a fictional riot. He engages with this palpable tension with much insight, offering in the process a balanced critique of both Hindu cultural nationalism and Muslim fundamentalism, and a convincing account of the role of the administration in controlling riots. On another level, the book is concerned with unraveling the mystery that surrounds the murder of an idealistic American student and welfare worker, Priscilla Hart, who comes to India to volunteer in a women's health programme, during the riot. The novel, highly praised for its brilliant experimentation with narrative form, chronicles the unresolved mystery of Priscilla Hart's death through the mutually contradictory accounts of a group of characters who narrate their individual versions of the events which led to the tragedy. Intellectually challenging and emotionally engrossing, *Riot* is a fictional tour-de-force 'about the ownership of history, about love, hate, cultural collision, religious fanaticism, and the impossibility of knowing the truth.

6. Conclusion

The present work has the artistic and critical taste to show Indianness in writing novels. It helps the students to get knowledge regarding the inspiring and motivating history of India. It also shows Shashi Tharoor's learnedness as a novelist by deriving his extraordinary qualities and characteristics as well as the use of Indian aspects in writing novels. It's an innovative attempt to find out Indianness from different angles like theme, characters, use of Indian history, culture, use of myths, way of narration and techniques in writing novels including, *The Great Indian Novel*, *Show Business*, and *Riot*. Shashi Tharoor himself said in one of the interviews, "India has changed and keeps on changing, so any answers I give you today will be out of date in a year or two."⁽³⁾

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