

REPRESENTATION OF INDIANNESS IN THE WORKS OF SHASHI THAROOR

AfshaKausarZ.Khan¹

Nagpur

Email Id - afshaphd.khan@gmail.com

Mob.No. - 8657052426

Dr. AjietR. Jachak²

Assistant Professor

Bar.SheshraoWankhedeMahavidyalaya

Email Id - arjachak@gmail.com

Mob. No. - 9822467755

Abstract:

The present work is regarding the Representation of Indianness within the novels of ShashiTharoor. The work includes his three valuable novels like 'The Great Indian Novel', 'Show Business' and 'Riot- A love story'. ShashiTharoor has added new flavor having both a literary tradition associated with Indian lives, of using a language & literary form that link anyone to the literature. There is the distinctive quality of Indianness seems in his works, be its theme, explorations of thoughts & ideas of Indianness. Most of his literary creations are focus on Indian themes and that they are marked with the phrase INDO-NOSTALGIC. Here, I have created a simple try out to show mirror image of Indians including the above mentioned three novels.

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

Introduction:

Indian English literature especially after 1960 neither incorporates nor does it very indulge Romanticization of India. It's become mature enough to write about concerning our own necessities, successes, ambitions, aspirations and even our own failures. Indian English Literature nowadays examines Indian society, culture and faith with brutal frankness. Now a day, English has not only been a medium of communication for Indians but also has achieved excellence in inventive writing. They have changed the face of India as said by ShashiTharoor in one amongst 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)

Glimpse of Tharoor's Distinctive Qualities of Indianness:

Dr ShashiTharoor is an Indian voice that echoes the theme of Indianness. He travelled widely as a NRI still as antecedently UNO secretary. As a result, he has got a multi-cultural experience. He defeats the thought that over collision of cultures, it ought to be the worldwide interaction that should forge the path for human happiness. Tharoor endeavors to chronicle multi-dimensional aspects of Indian culture and society in all his writing. In fact, his writing is a complete cultural product thus 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)

Indianness in the Great Indian Novel :

'The Great Indian Novel is a satirical novel published in 1989', it is a political satire that interprets, The Mahabharata, 2000 year old epics 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 telling 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 re-forms the story of the nascent Indian democracy as a struggle between groups and individuals that closely related by their personal and political histories. Through his cantankerous narrator, Tharoor takes an irreverent tone towards figures like Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, who are normally treated with reverence by Indians. The phrase "Great Indian novel" is a reference to the long-standing idea of the "Great American Novel" it is also a pun and 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 substantial characteristic of Tharoor's version of the story is, the emphasis on the older generations (e.g., Bhishma, Dhritarashtra, and Pandu) and the resultant de-emphasis on the actions of the Kauravas and the Pandavas.

Indianness in Show Business :

Tharoor's second novel, Show Business, is a pungent satire on the Bombay film industry, which came into existence in 1929. The book was later on tailored into a film referred to as movie industry (Bollywood). The narrative follows the career of a renowned film star Ashok-Banjara, from the period, the struggling actor tried to search out a grip within the film industry 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 background to Banjara's rise to the acme of Bombay's commercial cinema is a non-stop carousel of the main blockbusters he has acted in a never ending fantasy that took over his life fully associated and transformed it into an astonishing, though compelling, lie. Tharoor uses film that he considers to be a crucial medium for transmission of fictional expertise to the Indian masses, as a resourceful metaphor to explore the contemporary myths that are created by the favored 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 expensive 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 depicts 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.”

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, and 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, this 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.

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 ShashiTharoor'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. ShashiTharoor 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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