

An Analysis of the Ancient Culture in the Novels of Shashi Tharoor and Amitav Ghosh

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Abstract: *The history of Shashi Tharoor and Amitav Ghosh will be investigated from a comparative standpoint in the research paper. All the authors included historical events from the Indian subcontinent in their works, but their depiction styles differed. The same historical event has been portrayed several times. This essay will attempt to evaluate the novels by contrasting how the same scenario is depicted in different novels. The purpose of this essay is to compare the technical and thematic components of each novel. The article provides a comprehensive summary of the Indian subcontinent's geopolitical and cultural reality as depicted in literature.*

Key Words: *Historical, thematic, technological, sociopolitical, and cultural considerations.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

This paper will also explore the current study's importance and the possibility of future research. We will gain a better understanding of the Indian subcontinent's sociopolitical and cultural difficulties by examining and analysing the works of today's novelists. A study of this type will also look into several major meaning-related topics that have yet to be addressed. It will also help us better understand the current sociopolitical, cultural, and economic issues confronting the Indian subcontinent.

The daily activities of the four families, their relatives, and friends, as well as the projection of fictional characters who both influence and are affected by political events, historical figures, and fictional representations of historical figures, are used to depict history and politics of the time. The social environment of the time, the country's existence soon following independence, the traditional marriage system, the land reform bill, and caste and religious discrimination have all been discussed in the article. It has been investigated how the nation's political environment altered during Nehru's administration, including the split in the Congress party, the general election, and the problem of power abuse that has crept into politics.

The paper explored the issue of racial unrest and political communalization as depicted in the novel's fictionalized riots and recreation of the Ayodhya conflict. The texts chosen by these two authors provide a comprehensive understanding of the Indian subcontinent's geopolitical and cultural realities. The essay discusses selecting a time period, conveying historical context, and describing events that differ from novel to novel. Both novels reconstruct the history of the Indian Subcontinent through the individual mode of writing history, blending personal histories with public history of the country.

2. DISCUSSION:

The Great Indian Novel retells history from 1915 to 1980 in a mythological form. Historical events and characters are evaluated in these works through the lens of the consequences they must have had on people's personal lives, family lives, community lives, and, eventually, the state. The nation's difficulties are seen from several perspectives, and these perspectives have helped us understand reality more profoundly and clearly. They take diverse methodologies, which gives the reader a new view on the past through their historical depictions. Because of the various points of view, readers can learn about historical events, people, and times in a more detailed and objective manner. While dealing with the pages of history, these writers have given the same historical occurrences various interpretations and meanings. They have also emphasized the sociopolitical and cultural components of historical events in their fictional depictions of history. This also improves our understanding of the Indian subcontinent's sociopolitical and cultural realities.

Thus, in this article, the authors' portrayals of history in their works are compared. Using the previous articles' theories, investigations, and assessments as a foundation, this article will look at how Tharoor and Ghosh are historical writers. Furthermore, it would stimulate further research in the subject area covered in the current study. A study of this type will also investigate several major meaning-related topics that have yet to be addressed. It will also help us better understand the current sociopolitical, cultural, and economic issues confronting the Indian subcontinent. The 1980s novel sets the tone for a new movement in Indian English literature. It has had a long-lasting impact on Indian English literature and is widely considered as the birthplace of a new generation of authors known as the Ghosh generation. These novelists, whose first novels were published in the mid-1980s or early 1990s, broke down the linguistic boundaries that had previously prohibited prior novelists from writing worldwide and contemporaneously, while also bringing a new internationalism to their fiction. Many of them come from cities. While analyzing the progress of these writers and what one would expect of them in 1993, Kanga, the author of *Trying to Grow and Heaven on Wheels*, comments that the possibility of the new generation of writers leaving a lasting impression on the global literary scene with their rich cultural heritage and linguistic control is not a far-fetched proposition: In reality, South Africa and India have the greatest potential for English-language writing. Both can gain from the richest cultures' resources.

There has been a substantial amount of historical fiction published recently. A close assessment of contemporary literature reveals the author's preoccupation with our country's past, as well as readers' unwavering interest in books that depict the past or debate key national events with far-reaching implications. A historical book is nothing more than an assessment of a specific time of historical fact as projected by the author, who expresses his viewpoint using fiction-writing techniques. He does, in fact, provide a new viewpoint on his interactions with history.

Because literary artists have a natural ability to see beyond their own time, Indian English novelists responded to the call for independence, equality, and human rights the best. They act as lenses, so to speak, through which the common person can view what poses a social, cultural, or political threat to him, alerting him to the danger that lies ahead. As it was, several works were written during the time period that demonstrated the unfairness of British domination and the brave struggle waged by the public to abolish it. Politics and nationalism have become inextricably linked.

Tharoor "emblemizes the preoccupation with re-viewing history obtaining in Post-colonial writings" (Salat 127) by seeking to reflect Indian history in his fiction. The Great Indian Novel fictionalizes the events of the three decades after independence and the Indian liberation fight. Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* is a caustic and episodic reimagining of twentieth-century India based on the plot of the legendary Hindu epic, the Mahabharata. The Mahabharata is utilized to narrate the history of British colonial India as well as its subsequent history after independence till 1980. In its recounting, it tries to "explore what has made India and nearly unmade it, and to consider the nature of truth in life as in fiction, in tradition as in history" (BIB 23). *The Great Indian Novel*, on the other hand, "opposes Imperial history and tells the story of India's colonization from the perspective of those decanters the colonizers and foregrounds Indians and Indian systems" (101).

In this approach, he aims to link myth to history as "a post-colonial replies to the colonial consciousness" (Shah 93). According to Helen Tiffin, the basic purpose of postcolonial writing is to "establish or rehabilitate self against either European appropriation or rejection" (Mishra 14). It is performed through a variety of methods. Postcolonial writers from India, Africa, and Australia who have developed metaphysical systems and strong indigenous traditions use their cultures to challenge the dominant European historical narrative. Tharoor uses India's rich cultural tradition to contextualize contemporary Indian events in the framework of its ancient past, and he refutes European attempts to reject Indian culture and tradition. The objective of the book, according to Tharoor, is for the book to "affirm and enhance an Indian cultural identity, to broaden understanding of the Indian cultural and historical heritage, and to reclaim for Indians the story of India's national experience and its own reassertion of itself, including the triumphs and disappointments of independence (What the Novel 5).

In the words of Partha Chatterjee, "Myth, history, and the contemporary - all become part of the same chronological sequence; one is not distinguished from another, the passage from one to the other, consequently, is entirely unproblematic" (117). While myth and history are traditionally considered as antagonistic in the traditional western concept of history, they are not seen as antagonistic in India. Myth, legendary personalities, and oral tales continue to be relevant today. They help us understand our past, present, and future. Tharoor mixes myth and history to comprehend postcolonial India in the context of its past.

Tharoor was looking for a way to express his feelings about India. Because its "characters and personages still march triumphantly in Indian minds; its myths and legends still inspire the Indian imagination; and its events still speak to Indians with a contemporary resonance rare in many twentieth-century works," he thought the Mahabharata was the ideal vehicle (BIB 18). He utilized the Mahabharata as a framework to "retell the political history of twentieth-century India, through, a fictional recasting of its events, episodes, and characters" (BIB, 15). Tharoor frequently refers

to the Mahabharata's framework in his narratives of twentieth-century India's political history, which aids him in assessing the nation's social and political reality.

Both the words "Maha," which means "Great," and "Bharat," which means "India," are derived from the legendary epic. The entire work "draws heavily from it and, in its formal/narrative structure, metaphorically parallels the mode and methodology of the great epic," according to Salat (p. 127). The novel's 18 chapters are based on the epic's 18 parvas, and their titles are based on well-known works of Indian literature, such as "The Duel with the Crown," "Passages Through India," "Midnight's Parents," "The Rigged Veda," and so on. In his funny and periodic reinterpretation, events and characters from Indian history are repeated in legendary snippets. Many of the characters, acts, and situations in the book are based on people and events recounted in the epic Mahabharata, as Tharoor admits in the book's "Afterword." (419).

The historical people from India are shown in a manner similar to those in the Mahabharata, but with a few alterations that make them appear to belong in "the Song of Modern India" (18). "V.V." and "Ganapati" are abbreviations for Lord Ganesha and the author of the epic Ved Vyas, respectively. The Mahabharata is defined as "a work which remains a perennial source of delight and inspiration to millions in India" (419). The epic's struggles and aspirations are still relevant today and are critical to understanding Indian reality. The epic narrates the account of the battle between the Kaurava and Pandava dynasties, which culminated in the Battle of Kurukshetra.

Tharoor wishes to stress that the Kurukshetra conflict is never over. "Life is Kurukshetra," the narrator adds, as V.V. Kurukshetra is history. Every citizen of our nation engages in the fight between dharma and adharma every day of our lives (391). The political and social context of the country has had a significant impact on Amitav Ghosh's writing. He also acknowledges that his experiences living on campus and travelling both within and beyond the country aided his development as a creative writer. The aesthetic is multidimensional, sardonic, and a bizarre and mundane mixture. It's full of strange individuals, terrible adventures, and strange events. There is a conflict between rationality and superstition, the head and the heart, crime and the law, and the group and the individual.

Amitav Ghosh has established a distinct writing style and strategy for his subjects. His fictional and nonfictional works blend elements of history, philosophy, science, literature, anthropology, and folklore with popular culture genres such as detective fiction, picaresque narrative, travelogue, and social criticism books. Ghosh is a postmodern novelist who is also a humanist in many aspects. Amitav Ghosh's well-known work *The Glass Palace* shows a recently updated vision of history that has taken a courageous step to challenge so-called mainstream history. Although each community has its own history, the author convincingly contends that everyone has a unique contribution to give to the bigger picture. "The Glass Palace" is an excellent example of Amitav Ghosh's writing that arranges the subject and ties it to history. The author's father participated in the war, and his uncle's experiences as a trader in Burma inspired the book. It follows the intertwined lives of three families in Burma, India, and British Malaya from 1885 to the present. In his "Author's Notes," Ghosh discloses "read hundreds of books, memoirs, travelogues, gazetteers, articles and notebooks, published and unpublished; I travelled thousands of miles, visiting and revisiting, as far as possible, all the setting and location that figure in this novel; I sought out scores of people in India Malaysia Myanmar and Thailand" (Ghosh: 2000, pp. 249-250).

Amitav Ghosh's portrayal of Uma, the widow of a Ratnagiri collector, is a magnificent vehicle for presenting Gandhian philosophy. Uma believes in Gandhian philosophy and tries to apply it to everyday problems. Uma does an excellent job of fully understanding Gandhiji's struggles with Indian society. She claims that imperialism is not a way of social reform: "Let me be the first to recognize our own civilization's atrocities - as a woman, I guarantee you that I am even more aware of them than you are." Mahatma Gandhi frequently stated that our reform struggle. After that, however, allow me to add that we must not be misled into believing that imperialism is not an attempt at reform. (2000: p.294).

The story's ironic mingling of nations, which is powerfully introduced at the beginning, might be seen as a clash of cultures. Rajkumar's 'accidental' arrival in Mandalay, Burma's capital, amid the sound of English guns and the approaching imperialist threat, is the first of many signals of a power shift and a shift in cultural standing. The Burmese King's "Royal Proclamation" is issued in clear terms, but not without irony: "To all Royal subjects and citizens of the Royal empire; those Heretics, the barbarian English kalaas having most severely made Demands destined to cause the harm and ruin of our religion the violation of our national traditions and customs. "The degeneration of our race is acting out and bracing itself as if it is going to attack our state." They have gotten responses that are in line with the practices of great nations and utilize fair and suitable language (2000: p. 15-16).

3. CONCLUSION:

We will gain a better understanding of the Indian subcontinent's sociopolitical and cultural difficulties by examining and analysing the works of today's novelists. The plot is made up of several stories. It enables the story's author to cover several historical developments that occurred in the three countries from the end of the nineteenth

century to the present. The novel begins with Rajkumar's narrative, which takes place in 1885. Because the novelist is "not an authority to be relied on," his narrative is false. Colonial history is twisted with human histories in order to destroy and establish new histories and cultures. The author reimagines the deportation of the Burmese royal family to India from a post-colonial perspective. The family is transported to Madras and is forever separated from its ancestors.

The story recounts Rajkumar's gradual rise to prominence as a teak merchant in Burma, with the help of his mentor, Saya John, as well as the royal family's compulsive assimilation to the Indian family and Indian culture in Madras. The piece effectively depicts the transition from elite to low culture. As the elite and lower classes collapse, new communities emerge. Despite her strenuous efforts to maintain aristocratic superiority, the queen's daughters choose a commoner as their partner. The first princess kidnaps Dolly's sweetheart, and they finally marry. Dolly's loyalty to the royal family compels her to sacrifice her own happiness to safeguard the first princes.

Memory and imagination are required to fictionalize reality. The novel's core themes, colonization and transcultural difficulties, centre on the global stage. The author goes above and beyond to manage power, which has an impact on both public and private lives. Ghosh discusses government and its replacement by the next at an instant when the world breaks free from its fantasy moorings and reveals itself to be girded in the ways of survival and self-preservation, as Sheela Reddy quotes, "This is how power is eclipsed in a moment of vivid realism." Ghosh conveys the book's main issue mostly through his characters: the folly of building nation states and the folly of constructing boundaries that arbitrarily partition people when their memories remain undivided.

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