

**Satirical Tone in Shashi Tharoor's The Great Indian Novel****Mohammad Nasiruddin Bashiruddin**

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Email: [nasiruddin919@gmail.com](mailto:nasiruddin919@gmail.com)**Abstract:**

*The present paper explores Satire as a stylistic element in The Great Indian Novel by Shashi Tharoor. The Great Indian Novel is a biting satire on the political history of modern India that is modeled on the ancient epic The Mahabharata. The pre-dominant tone used in the novel is that of satire. This paper aims at finding the satiric mechanism portrayed in The Great Indian Novel. The present study is an attempt to show how Tharoor has made effective use of satire as the main mode of narration in The Great Indian Novel.*

**Key Words:** Satire, Tone, Parody, Post-Modern, Style

**Introduction:**

In The Great Indian Novel Shashi Tharoor has adopted different narratives like Satire, Pun, Irony, Parody, Humour and Comedy. Among these techniques, Satire and Parody are the dominant modes. Indian Writing in English had not given much serious attention to satire, like English literature. Only a few writers have tried to employ satire in their writings. R. K. Narayan has used gentle irony and paradox in his novels. His comic vision is full of irony. His irony includes social and political context in his character with different experiences. The irony lies in clash between tradition and modernity. A. K. Ramanujan also employed satire in his poems but not as serious mode. Shashi Tharoor made use of satire as a dominant mode in his way of narration. Tharoor becomes as a successful writer in fiction and non-fiction by his different ways of narration. As a well known post-modernist Shashi Tharoor uses the post-modern techniques in his novels very effectively. The present study is an attempt to show how Tharoor has made effective use of satire as the main mode of narration in The Great Indian Novel.

**Satire:** 'Satire' often strictly defined as a literary genre. In 'satire', human voices, follies, abuses or short comings are helped up to censure by means of ridicule, burlesque, irony or other methods, ideally with the intent to bring improvement. Only in the eighteenth century English literature has given importance to satire and it became a popular literary

mode. During this period the writers were very critical and to some extent they used the satirical mode for their personal animosity. But the use of satire in Tharoor's The Great Indian Novel is completely different. He himself considers satire as an important exhilarating way of dealing with human experience of the past and the present. 'Satire' is perhaps the most relevant literary mode in The Great Indian Novel, because it is on the glory and folly of India and the Indian society.

The Great Indian Novel is a political satire. Tharoor integrates remote history with the recent history. The great epic, The Mahabharata is the main source for Tharoor's The Great Indian Novel. The Mahabharata is an ancient epic poem. However Tharoor has integrated both verse and prose forms for effective satiric narration by Vyasa. The Great Indian Novel is a fictional work of Tharoor that takes the story of The Mahabharata, the ancient epic of Hindu Mythology, and recasts it in the context of the Indian independence Movement and also figures out the first three decades of Post-Independence of India. The Mahabharata is an epic tale describing the dynastic struggle over the throne of the kingdom of Hastinapur between the Pandavas and the Kauravas; two branches of the heir of the King Shantanu. In The Great Indian Novel Tharoor recasts the story of the budding Indian democracy as a struggle between groups and individuals closely related to personal and political histories.

Tharoor has fictionalized two groups of Kaurava and Pandava parties. The Congress party as Kaurava Party, the villains led by Duryodhani, who

usurp the Pandavas from the rule of Hastinapur. Indira Gandhi, daughter of Nehru, and the third Prime Minister in Tharoor's fictionalization appears as Priya Duryodhani. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the father of Pakistan, a law graduate and colleague of Nehru and Gandhi in the Indian National Congress, fictionalized as Mohammad Ali Karna, son of Kunti and Hyperion Helios, the leader of the Muslims.

Tharoor has used all forms of satires like allegory, irony, pun, parody, etc. In The Great Indian Novel Tharoor has satirized all national heroes. Tharoor's description of Dhritrashtra is satirical.

*"Dhritrashtra was a fine-looking young fellow, slim of aquiline nose And aristocratic bearing. His blindness was, of course, a severe handicap, but he learned early to act as if it did not matter. As a child he found education in India a harrowing experience, which was no doubt, even he was in due course sent to Eton ..... He quickly acquired two dozen suits, a different pair of shoes .....abstracted manner of the over educated. With these assets he was admitted to King's College, Cambridge; he devoted himself to developing another kind of vision and became, successively a formidable debater, a Bachelor of arts and Fabian Socialist."*  
(Tharoor, 1989, p. 41.)

While mocking the contemporary society, Tharoor ridicules the rituals of the Vedic Culture. While describing about himself, Vyasa in The Great Indian Novel mentions that:

*"I was born with the century, a bastard, but a bastard in a fine tradition, the offspring of a fisherwoman seduced by a travelling sage."*  
(Tharoor, 1989, p. 6)

While narrating the story of Satyawati, the mother of sage Vyasa, Tharoor describes the prevalent custom where Brahmins and Sages would ask young girls to accompany them with a promise of higher learning in return. Tharoor makes a biting satire on this custom by saying that such company of Sages resulted in the birth of numerous illegitimate children such as Ved Vyasa, the author of The Mahabharata itself.

In the ancient Vedic society, Brahmins enjoyed utmost respect and they were at the top of social hierarchy. In those days, there was an old tradition of Brahmins helping the widow Kshatriya women to have children. When a Kshatriya king would suddenly die and leave an heirless kingdom behind, then the Brahmins would come to rescue of the heirless land by procreating with the widow queens and, thus giving the kingdom heir. Tharoor mocks this by recreating the situation of the text The Mahabharata. According to the epic story, Vichitravirya, the son of king Shantanu and Satyawati, dies young leaving behind his two young wives, Ambika and Ambalika childless. After the death of Vichitravirya his mother Satyawati tries to convince her other son, Ganga to 'take Ambika and Ambalika to bed.' As she would tell Ganga:

*'don't forget that we have a long tradition of Brahmins coming to the rescue of barren Kshatriya. It may have fallen somewhat into disuse in recent years, but it could be useful again today'.* (Tharoor, 1989, p.25)

**Conclusion:**

The Great Indian Novel is Shashi Tharoor's most ambitious classical novel. For this novel Tharoor has gained fame and a wider reader audience both in India and abroad. In this novel satire is the main mode of narration. In terms of structure and issues Tharoor has modeled The Great Indian Novel on the ancient epic The Mahabharata. Shashi Tharoor has used parody in this novel. Tharoor's using of parody is not just imitation, it points out the faults, reveals hidden affection, emphasizes weakness and diminishes strength, and through these elements he has made it satiric parody. The Great Indian Novel is a biting satire on the political history of modern India modeled on the ancient epic The Mahabharata.

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