

THE GREAT INDIAN NOVEL

The great Indian civilisation has been, since times immemorial, influenced by religious texts, especially the two great epics, *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*. Both these epics written by Rishi Valmiki and Rishi Ved Vyas respectively reflect the culture of the sub – continent and its people. As is evident from its name *The Mahabharata* envisages the tales from the great and ancient land Bharata. It reveals a rich civilisation and a highly evolved society which albeit a part of the ancient order, surprisingly has an unequivocal resemblance with the recent present. *The Mahabharata* identifies and establishes the intrinsic humanity that does not recognise the limitations imposed by caste, colour, language and boundaries. Centuries ago it was proclaimed concerning this great text, "what is not in it is nowhere." ¹

The characters of *The Mahabharata* play an important role in the formation of the ideals. A word concerning any one of them carries along with it a world of significance, for every child in India learns the immortal story of *The Mahabharata* as he learns his mother tongue at his mother's knee. C.R. Deshpande in the epigraph to Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* states:

The Mahabharata has not only influenced the literature, art, sculpture and painting of India but it has also moulded the very character of the Indian people. Characters from the Great Epic... are still household words [which] stand for domestic or public virtues or vices.... In India a philosophical or even political controversy can hardly be found that

has no reference to the thought of *The Mahabharata*.²

C. Rajagopalachari, in his preface to the translation of *The Mahabharata* also states:

Mahabharata is one of our noblest heritages... It strengthens the soul and drives home – as nothing else does – the vanity of ambition and the evil and futility of anger and hatred.³

The story of the epic essentially deals with the royalty of the ancient state of Hastinapur; and besides elucidating the social life of the royals; the author also deals with the society in general. Concomitant to the description of the way of life in the ancient times, the epic also discusses at length the essential human nature and human behaviour manifest in varied circumstances. The war fought at Kurukshetra, between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, is not the only reason behind Ved Vyas's choice of the title of the epic. It is justified, more appropriately, by the fact that it picturises the life, the emotions, the sentiments, the tears and smiles of the people of Bharata as a whole. It is this all pervasive aspect of the epic that makes it a great Indian literary piece, and thus a *Mahabharata*.

Shashi Tharoor, an eminent author of both fiction and non – fiction has reinvented and remoulded the stories of this great epic as an account of the political history of India since the British days to the present, in his first fictional work called *The Great Indian Novel* that relates the story of the great country India. However, as is quite evident, the novel takes its title in deference to its primary source of inspiration, *The*

Mahabharata. In Sanskrit *Maha* means great and *Bharata* means India and therefore Tharoor calls his novel *The Great Indian Novel*. In one sense the novel is an exhaustive analysis of the influence of *The Mahabharata*. Giving reasons for making the latter as a basis for his novel regarding the Indian freedom struggle, leading to the partition of India, and correlating the two, Tharoor himself confesses:

Both are stories that at different levels are told and retold in Indian culture. In my intermixing the two, I was able to cast a perhaps cynical modern sensibility upon the great legends of the past, but equally was able to cast some of the values of that past onto the experiences of the more recent present. ⁴

He not only juxtaposes the atmospherics of *The Mahabharata* with modern history, but also amalgamates the two beautifully though at the cost of taking certain liberties. This amalgamation illustrates the postcolonial theorist Edward W. Said's viewpoint that European imperialism can be best comprehended vis á vis cultural texts.⁵ At the same time this juxtaposition of the ancient and the recent pasts further underlines a heightened degree of self consciousness, highlighting the postmodern spirit of the novel. Critics like Bran Nicol observe that such a postmodern attitude 'underscores our culture". Although the reader experiences some confusion regarding facts and their correlation in *The Great Indian Novel* yet the manner in which the author deals with them fully engrosses his attention. The novel possesses an extremely wide horizon that encompasses the essential Indian ethos with

all its nuances, as the author explicates the ethnic Indian character belonging both to the ancient and the modern times.

Thus *The Great Indian Novel* deserves to be termed as an 'eminently readable' text, powerfully and modestly narrating a human history with extraordinary profundities. An English novel with an Indian subject that establishes its own class, this piece of fiction emerges as an entertaining tour de force that reinvents India with a dazzling marriage of Hindu mythology and modern history. In this first fictional endeavour of his, Tharoor deals with a brilliant concept deftly executed which deserves appreciation not only for its subject but also for its technique and technical experimentation. It emblematises the persistent presence of time as a Shakespearean stage trodden by characters of two different ages, with their respective predicaments.

Telling its tale on an epic scale, Tharoor's novel emerges as a narrative equivalent of Ved Vyas's *Mahabharata*. Adopting the latter's framework, Tharoor divides *The Great Indian Novel* into eighteen books, each one of which gives a balanced attention to both its sources of inspiration – the stories of *The Mahabharata* and those of the Indian freedom struggle. While Tharoor's adherence to the *Mahabharata* epitomizes his deference to his ancient culture, his narration of India's freedom struggle, and its aftermath emerges as a lively rendition of the subcontinent's colonial and postcolonial scenario. By virtually alternating every mythical incident which he borrows from *The Mahabharata*, with an elucidation of a political event marking modern Indian history, Tharoor not only amalgamates the two distantly placed ages in *The Great Indian Novel* but also signals the death of a grand narrative. An apparent exemplification of a meta-fictional text *The Great Indian Novel* actually emerges as a recreation of the present/recent past in the context of the ancient past portraying

each as a 'simulacrum' of the other, since owing to identical features of humanity, society consistently evolves into a simulation of itself.

Equally at ease with the great epic and the recent political past of the subcontinent Shashi Tharoor instead of presenting his readers with a conventional narrative, chronologically stating the sequence of events, as would have been the case with a historian, deals with history by using a narrative mode, which is essentially non – mimetic, a mode which envisages comedy, humour, satire, farce and allegory. Thus narrating the story of *The Great Indian Novel* through Ved Vyas (V.V. to his amanuensis Ganapathi) Tharoor describes the mythical episodes of *The Mahabharata* as inseparably merged with the twentieth century contextually, re-acquainting the reader with Indian history in a new recast light. His application of myth as evidenced in the novel is in a postmodernist vein – suggestive and fragmentary – embarking upon the allegorically inimitable comical and satirical styles of writing. These postmodern nuances explicated in the novel are clearly substantiated in the following words:

The title itself is a take off on the ancient Indian epic *The Mahabharata* (The Great Narrative of India). By a daring stroke of imagination, Tharoor finds uncanny correspondences between the chief characters and events in the three thousand year old epic and the leading political figures and developments in modern Indian history. These correspondences are not mechanically worked out, they are suitably modified, sometimes hinted at rather than fully spelt out; and on occasion they are given an ironic

twist in a spirit of self mockery, which is so characteristic of postmodernism.⁵

Thus following a postmodern technique of expressing himself, Shashi Tharoor emerges as a postcolonial diasporic author exemplifying Homi K Bhabha's concept of 'hybridity'. Writing in the language of the British colonisers of India, this Indian expatriate beautifully portrays the splendid past of his ancient country and its civilisation, unveiling her and introducing her to the Western world. This fictionalised introduction of the subcontinent's history is an impressive instance of the pride enjoyed and emphatically expressed by Tharoor in his culture, his religion, his civilisation and his nation's history. Recalling the grandeur of India's past V.V. observes:

They tell me India is an underdeveloped country.... I tell them that if they would only read *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana*, study the Golden Ages of the Mauryas and the Guptas and even of those.... Mughals, they would realise that India is not an underdeveloped country, but a highly advanced one in an advanced state of decay.⁶

These words voiced by the narrator reveal a visible upsurge of pride and love in the heart of a native for his imperialistically emaciated land and its culture, exhibiting the author's angst regarding his country's future. Thus vividly apprising his readers of India's glorious and much developed past through V.V., Tharoor not only showcases an oppressed native's endeavour to reassert his identity in *The Great Indian Novel* but also places the so called 'third world' sub continental

civilization before the 'developed' first world in the chronology of time.

Imbibing an opulence of Tharoor's innovative and ingenious skills, the novel, a historical account principally given in the form of an allegory, is a fascinating blend of two types of exceptional pasts of the subcontinent: the first being the ancient past, and the second one the recent past. Evidencing Fredric Jameson's eclectic concepts of 'pastiche' and 'parody', both these distantly placed historical sequences of events are 'appropriated' by the author, with such a deft stroke, that they mutually allegorise each other enhancing the richness and depth of their consequences. In other words, *The Great Indian Novel* not only allegorises the modern political history of India, but also the ancient past of the country. Tharoor's portrayal of the modern political history in this allegorical work of fiction is an emphatic and vivid exemplification of the political exigencies prevalent during the era of British imperialism in the country; it's ruthless partition just before its liberation; followed by a description of the circumstances encumbering its polity after the end of the colonial period. The author purports to paint these sequences of recent political history of India through the kaleidoscopic view of *The Mahabharata*, whose characters allegorise the ones from the Indian history and vice versa. Through this allegorical amalgamation of the ancient and the modern times, he highlights that the essential nature of man perpetually remains the same, and history repeats itself.

While Salman Rushdie once denounced the tendency of Indian readers to interpret creative works as allegories, by referring to it as a disease, Tharoor edifies allegorical representations. In *The Great Indian Novel*, he succeeds in fathoming history and myth in a new fangled manner, adorned by a touch of uniqueness. Expanding on the allegorical aspect

of his work Tharoor writes in his "Afterword" to the novel: "Many of the characters, incidents and issues in this novel are based on people and events described in the great epic [*Mahabharata*]... A work which remains a perennial source of delight and inspiration to millions in India."(419)

Thus largely indebted to *The Mahabharata* for providing him with a strong foundation for *The Great Indian Novel*, Shashi Tharoor endeavours to narrate the modern history of India, equally distributed before and after the partition of the sub – continent. The novel in this way evolves into a potent statement on the colonised as well as the decolonised India.

An indictment of colonialism in the postcolonial vein exemplified by Edward W. Said's concept of 'Orientalism' *The Great Indian Novel* establishes itself as an avid statement on India's ancient past as well as recent past/present. In a suggestive, often fragmented manner this piece of fiction produced by a diasporic author emerges as an interrogation of the principles of historiography adopted by the British colonisers, representing itself as a sincere and a successful effort of the author to rewrite the history of the subcontinent. This focus on the dimensions of historiography manifest in *The Great Indian Novel* is augmented by Tharoor with the help of much of inversion, distortion, parody and pastiche evident in his playful attitude that destabilises history and constantly undermines its certitudes.

Shashi Tharoor's version of the historical account of Indian polity extends over a considerably long period of time. Envisaging almost a period of five thousand years and juxtaposing the ancient and the modern characters of history, the novel begins with Gangaji's (Gandhi's) appearance on the Indian political scene, and ends with Priya Duryodhani's (Mrs. Indira Gandhi's) return to power after the fall of the Janta Front or the Janta Government. Thus covering approximately a period

of sixty years, *The Great Indian Novel* encompasses approximately thirty years before the partition of India, and thirty years after that. When Shashi Tharoor remarks that, "When I go back into the themes of *The Great Indian Novel*, I'm in a sense saying, 'These are the things that have shaped me and Indians like me. These are the experiences that have created these people,'"⁷ he is in fact referring to all that has forged the conscience of the Indians and is unambiguously corroborating Gyan Prakash's suggestion that postcolonial critique "does not enjoy a panoptic distance from colonial history but exists as an aftermath, as an after-after being worked over by colonialism."⁸ Thus in the great Indian novel Tharoor alludes to the symbiotic influence of the cultural heritage of India that we have inherited from the days of *The Mahabharata* and the colonial incidents, events, circumstances and people, who led to the partition of the country. He also refers to those persons who accepted the responsibility of leading an independent India after the end of colonialism.

In *The Great Indian Novel*, Bhishma of *The Mahabharata* and Gandhi of the Indian Freedom Struggle become Ganga Datta or Gangaji. Tharoor allegorically draws a parallel between these two, one embedded in the mythological past and the other associated with the recent history, by emphasising that the two were equally austere in their principles and both willingly and consciously gave up their claim to power and governance of the country. Thus setting up Gangaji's character as a normative one for a sincere, selfless and a successful administrator/politician, Tharoor discusses his followers and the other members of the Indian freedom struggle and the polity as aberrations of his Gangaism (Gandhism).

While in *The Mahabharata*, Dhritrashtra and Pandu had a right to the throne of Hastinapur after Bhishma, in the Indian Political History, Nehru and Subhash were the contenders left

for leading the Indian polity after Gandhi. Thus Tharoor equates Dhritrashtra with Nehru, and Pandu with Subhash. As the novel proceeds, Gangaji's bias against Pandu becomes evident, and so does his preference for Dhritrashtra. It was because of Gangaji's favours towards him that Dhritrashtra was able to create a place for himself in the country's political arena, while Pandu had to pay heavily for Gangaji's indifference towards him. The fact that Gangaji supported Dhritrashtra is not only reinforced in *The Mahabharata* by Bhishma's unflinching support for Dhritrashtra and his Kaurava sons, despite his awareness of their falsity, but is also suggestive of Gandhi's unreasonable and at times blunderous bias in favour of Nehru.

Tharoor further underlines how the hunger for power, which was the cause of the battle of Kurukshetra in *The Mahabharata*, was an equally important theme in the political scene of both pre – and post – partition India. In the process of delineating this aspect he introduces the character of Karna, who stands for Jinnah and who despite belonging to the same clan was deprived of his rightful position in the forefront because of the circumstances of his birth. However, Karna fights courageously for his rights and finally succeeds in procuring a part of the territory of the subcontinent to set up a new nation called Karnistan which stands for Pakistan. This division of the Indian subcontinent into Pakistan and Hindustan on the 14th of August 1947 was recorded as 'the partition' in the annals of Indian History, an event that influenced the future of two nations.

This ruthless act of partitioning the subcontinent synonymous to a brutal amputation of the ancient civilisation of India, by the British was evidently a direct consequence of the policy of 'divide et impera' followed by the colonisers to conveniently enslave their colonised subjects. Dexterously

implementing this ploy of dividing the Indian society, the British imperialists, as described by Tharoor in *The Great Indian Novel*, emerge as manipulative and cunning subjugators decried by Jean Paul Sartre in his preface to Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*.⁹

Mahaguru Gangaji is portrayed in the novel as the initiator of the freedom struggle against the British colonisers of India, and Tharoor's politico – historical account takes off from the time when he establishes his presence on the Indian political scene. Since his entry on the Indian political scene synchronised with moments of national pride and frustration, of high expectation, fears and anxieties, Gangaji involved himself in an effort to allay these apprehensions of the people of British India, when British colonialism had consolidated itself into a tyrannical system. Commenting on the colonial ethics and practices of the British, and the shallow justifications given for them, Tharoor reveals their inhumanity:

[By] The simple logic of colonialism.... The rules of humanity applied only to the rulers, for the rulers were people and the people were objects.... Objects to be controlled, disciplined, kept in their place and taught lessons like so many animals: yes, the civilising mission upon which Rudyard and his tribe were embarked made savages of all of us and all of them. (80)

These words are an unequivocal revelation of the repulsion, the sickness and the reeking inhumanity insidiously operating under the veneer of the European imperial spirit. Thus, categorically denouncing the British *raj*, Tharoor seems to agree with Fanon's contention in which the latter states,

“When I search for Man in the technique and the style of Europe, I see only a succession of negations of man and an avalanche of murderers.”¹⁰ Further highlighting the exploitation of the Indians by their white rulers Tharoor expresses how the colonial machinations brutally victimised the destitute Indians and remarks “..., the British killed the Indian artisans, they exported our full – employment and they invented our poverty.” (95) This pervasive theme of the novel is reinforced by Mahatma Gandhi’s exposition of the manipulative colonial dominance and repression in the *Young India* of January 1921, wherein referring to the British government, he wrote: “I consider that I would be less than truthful if did not describe as satanic a government which has been guilty of fraud, murder and wanton cruelty, which still remains unrepentant and resorts to untruth to cover its guilt.”¹¹

It was under Gangaji's guidance that the Indian resistance against the British colonialism gained impetus, and flowered in the shadow of the principles and the ideals he stood for. Tharoor frequently reiterates the views of Gangaji as the novel proceeds and explicates them, albeit in an ironic tone. While elucidating the silent battle between Gangaji and the European oppressors he describes a series of non – violent protests that the former resorted to. His excursion to the town of Budge Budge where his fasting not only proved his ideals of Satyagrah, based on truth and non – violence but also sounded the death knell for colonialism in India forcing the British to 'budge' from their despotic stance. Steadfastly pursuing this technique to show his resistance to the colonialist policies of the British Raj, Gangaji convincingly justifies his means and remarks, “fasting... is my business.”

While addressing the Mahaguru’s non – violent movement in *The Great Indian Novel* by quoting the above mentioned episode in a small town of Budge Budge so as to make the

British ruler 'budge', Tharoor ingeniously uses the postmodern technique of using puns. Further appreciating this method of self affliction to show resentment and also highlighting the evaluation of this expression of rebellion through fasting, after Gangaji's death and after India was liberated from her colonial shackles, Tharoor tells Ganapathi,

Fasts, Ganapathi, have never worked half as well anywhere else as they have in India. Only Indians could have devised a method of political bargaining based on the threat of harm to yourself rather than to your opponent. Inevitably, of course, like all our country's other great innovations fasts too have been shamefully abused. As a weapon, fasts are effective only when the target of your action values your life more than his convictions – or at least feels that the society as a whole does. So they are ideally suited to a non – violent, upright national leader like Gangaji. But when used by lesser mortals with considerably less claim to the moral high ground and no great record of devotion of principle, fasts are just another insidious form of blackmail, abused and over – used in our agitation ridden land... But that is not the worst of it, Ganapathi, what more bathetic legacy could there be to Ganga, who risked his life for 27.5 percent, than that fasts have suffered the ultimate Indian fate reduced to the symbolic? What could be more absurd than the widely practiced 'relay fasts' of today's politicians, where different people

take it in turns to miss their meals in public? Since no one starves long enough to create problems for himself or others, the entire point of Gangaji's original ideal is lost. All we are left with is the drama without the sacrifice – and isn't that a metaphor for Indian politics of today? (105 – 106)

These candid remarks on the present blemishing and abusing the past, while on one hand are a revelation of the nature of Tharoor's historiography, on the other are a juxtaposition of the perceptions and attitudes of the Indian politicians towards the same ideals both during the colonial as well as the postcolonial eras. His analysis of the degradation of fasting and its bathetic fall from Gangaji's serious and grave significance, that he had attributed to the practice of fasting, to a mere hypocrisy-a mere symbolic practices- devoid of its previous sanctity is relevant to the present day political scenario.

Referring to Gangaji's victory at Budge Budge, Tharoor comments: "What happened at Budge Budge confirmed the force of the non – violent revolution that Gangaji had launched" (105). Later in the novel justifying the validity of his non – violent armoury, that he used to fight against British imperialism, Gangaji said:

There is no point... in choosing a method in which your opponent is bound to be superior. We must fight with those weapons that are stronger than theirs – the weapons of mortality and Truth. (82)

A rather shrewd justification for a seemingly naïve theory. The historians Dr. Ishwary Prashad and S.K. Subedar by claiming

that "except for Mahatma Gandhi, non – violence for people at large was at best a policy rather than a faith..."¹² rationalise the decadence of the sanctity associated with Gandhi's principles during the postcolonial scenario. In fact Tharoor too emerges as one of those who perceived Mahatma Gandhi's faith as the most practical and pragmatic policy that the colonised people of India could have adopted. He maintains:

By abstaining from violence he [Gangaji] wrested the moral advantage. By breaking the law non – violently he showed up the injustice of the law. By accepting the punishment of the law imposed on him he confronted the colonialists with their own brutalisation. And faced with some transcendent injustice, whether in jail or outside, some wrong that his normal method could not right, he did not abandon non – violence but directed it against himself. (55)

In this past oriented novel of his through which he brings to light the bases of the present Tharoor also expresses the confused and peevish reaction of the imperialist, confident of the impenetrability of their colonial fort, to the freedom struggle augmented by Gangaji's efforts. Referring to the latter's slogan of 'quit-India', and elucidating his civil disobedience movement which begins in *The Great Indian Novel* with the Motihari incident and culminates with the Mango March, Tharoor underlines how Gangaji's endeavours turned the tables on the alien administration with polite insolence, and proved to be a major colonial irritant. This is manifest in Sir Richard's peculiarly true – to – form colonial ire evident in the following quotation:

The man [Gangaji] challenges the very rules of the game.... We carve up the state for our administrative convenience, these so-called nationalist yell and scream blue murder, and what do we do? We give in, and erase the lines we've drawn as if that were all there was to it. That could be fatal, Heasiop, fatal. Once you start taking orders back you stop being able to issue them. (60-61)

These words addressed by Sir Richard to Heaslop lucidly spell out every British coloniser's philosophy of 'governance.' Further, these above quoted words of a White man who acknowledges that people belonging to his ilk had continuously 'carved' up or rather moulded the Indian state for their convenience, are a testimony to the cunning practices, such as 'divide and rule', that they used to colonise. Using Said's terminology, Tharoor here represents the Orientalist Sir Richard's grievances against Ganga who has succeeded in thwarting his British policies to orientalise the sub-continent.

Gangaji's opinion about the civil disobedience movement is explained in one of the letters he wrote to the Viceroy, a letter which according to the narrator "was a characteristic combination of both impertinence and ingenuity, fact and foible" (119). In this letter Gingili writes:

I have found it necessary on several occasions in the past to call into question some of the unjust laws that have been pressed on the brows of my people. indeed, I have been obliged on one or two occasions to disobey them and to lead others in

disobeying them, in full consciousness and complete acceptance of the penalties for such disobedience. I consider non – violent disobedience to be one of the few morally just measures open to my fellow Indians and myself. Our cause is to defend ourselves and our interests. I do not intend harm to a single Englishman in India, even if he be here as an uninvited guest. (119)

This concept of non – violent struggle is praised by the author not only for being worthy in itself because of its efficacy, but also as an apt method for maiming the autocratic might of the colonisers. He says:

Where sporadic terrorism and moderate constitutionalism had both proved ineffective, Ganga took the issue of freedom to the people as one of simple right and wrong – law versus conscience – and gave them a method to which the British had no response. (55)

Another cardinal principle of Gingili, which gained currency during his fight against the colonisation of his Indian brethren, was that of truth. The uniqueness and efficiency of his concept of truth, which entailed taking punishment willingly for the strength of one's convictions is thoroughly approved. "No dictionary imbues the word with the depth of meaning Gingili gave it," says Tharoor, and further adds, "His truth emerged from his conviction, it meant not only what was accurate, but was just and therefore right. Truth could not be obtained by 'untruthful' or 'unjust' or 'violent means" (48). The

fact, that Mahatma Gandhi (represented by Gingili) was a great votary of truth and non – violence is also revealed in his autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*.

My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than truth. And if every page of these chapters does not proclaim to the reader that the only means for the realisation of truth is Ahimsa, I shall deem all my labour, in writing these chapters to have been in vain. And even though my efforts in this behalf may prove fruitless, let the readers know that the vehicle and not the great principle is at fault.... The little fleeting glimpses, therefore, that I have been able to have of Truth can hardly convey an idea of indescribable luster of Truth, a million times more intense than that of the sun we daily see.... But this much I can say with assurance, as a result of all my experiments, that a perfect vision of Truth can only follow a complete realisation of Ahimsa.

Continuing further he adds:

To see the universal and all pervading spirit of Truth, face to face, one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. ¹³

Gingili successfully applied these principles to politics. "For him the means were as much important as the end. India's independence was a much noble cause and therefore, no ignoble means could be employed to win it. "¹⁴ Truth as

Tharoor too states in the novel, could not be obtained by immoral means. This principle of Truth further strengthens the bond that Tharoor has endeavoured to establish in *The Great Indian Novel* - the bond between Bhisma and Ganga or Gandhi. Both stood for Truth, both believed in Truth and both fought for Truth. And despite their unflinching faith in Truth and righteousness, both failed to prevent bloodshed, one at Kurukshetra and the other during the partition.

Mahatma Gandhi, Tharoor's Gingili became increasingly popular among the masses, with a distinctive economic, moral, social and political programme, all flowing from the pure and sanctimonious genius of one man. He was the only author and perfect interpreter of the weapons of 'Satyagraha', 'non - violence', 'non - cooperation' and 'civil disobedience'. Tharoor pays homage to the great man in one line, speaking volumes about him:

While he was alive, he was impossible to ignore; once he had gone, he was impossible to imitate. (47)

Thus while establishing Gingili as the most pious leader of the freedom fighters, who had toiled hard to lay the foundation of the edifice called ' independent India ', and imbued with the spirit of truth, ahimsa and satyagrah, Tharoor underline the endeavours of the Indian people to break free from the encumbrance of colonialism. Further, impressed by the ideals Mahatma Gandhi preached during his freedom struggle, Tharoor eulogises him as the idealistic and normative Ganga of Hastinapur, equivalent to the sacred river Ganga of the Hindus. Thus *The Great Indian Novel* while on one hand showcases the sincerity of faith and integrity of purpose personified by Gingili and his normative persona on the other,

it also emerges as a stage set up by the author juxtaposing him with the rest of the participants of the freedom movement and their successors, thus exposing them as aberrations, representing a corrupted picture of his ideals in the postcolonial scenario.

Although Tharoor's novel does not dwell upon the indiscriminate butchering of the colonised people of India as discussed by the postcolonialists starting from Fanon and Sartre to Said, yet it cannot be ignored that the British while withdrawing from India, a jewel in their imperial crown, left an indelible mark of their authority by callously amputating both its spirit and its soul. Replete with instances of inhuman rationality and pragmatism of the British rulers, *The Great Indian Novel* is a telling portrayal of their inhuman tactics and practices. One such episode which foregrounds the grotesque inhumanity of the British in the novel is the Bibigarh massacre, referred to as the Jalianwala Bagh Tragedy in the annals of Indian history.

Apparently, Gangaji's struggle based upon his high ideals was not an easy task. He was taken aback by the murderous means resorted to by the British with the purpose of subjugating the Indians. Tharoor's Bibigarh massacre was one such incident and it was in response to this virtual genocide of patriots that Gingili gave the slogan 'Quit India' which gained immense popularity thus evolving into a movement that spread throughout the country. Tharoor describes this cold blooded, and horrifying inhumanity of the British in the following words:

The soldiers fired just 1600 bullets that day Ganapathi. It was so mechanical, so precise; they used up only the rounds they were allocated, nothing was thrown away, no additional supplies sent for. Just 1600 bullets into the unarmed throng, and when they had

finished... 379 people lay dead, Ganapathi, and 1137 lay injured, many grotesquely maimed. When Rudyard was given the figures later he expressed satisfaction with his men. "Only 84 bullets wasted ", he said, "Not bad." (81)

The description of the Jalianwala Bagh massacre by Tharoor shows his agreement with the likes of Samuel P. Huntington, who believe that "the West won the world not by its superiority of its ideas or values or religion but rather by its superiority in applying organised violence." ¹⁵

A similar incident, which caused pain to the Mahaguru, was the 'Chaurasta' event, actually known as the Cahuri Chaura incident. A significant feature of Gangaji's campaign against the White colonisers of India was his proximity with the masses. Instead of simply focussing on the leadership, he involved the common man, the peasant and the worker into the mainstream of the freedom struggle, creating a deluge of freedom fighters from a mere trickle of campaigners. Substantiating and appreciating this endeavour of Gangaji's Dr. Dhar writes:

With this mass base, the poor and the middle classes got "their place in the sun" and the concept of nationalism acquired a new orientation... in spite of piquancies in Gangaji's style of functioning, he was a master strategist; though there was a great deal of drama and theatricality to his campaigns, which has been used to great comic effect, he gave the movement much – needed publicity in and outside India. The

people, whom he made into a strong force, were convinced that "they were not led by a saint with his head in the clouds, but by a master tactician with his feet on the ground."¹⁶

Gangaji's love for the masses catalysed the common man's feelings of pride in his country and his awareness regarding the freedom struggle. However this change of focus in India's struggle for freedom was not welcomed by all his colleagues. One of them was Karna, who represents Mohammad Ali Jinnah in the novel. Karna who made his appearance " as a flourishing lawyer in Bombay, sharp, suave, and self – assured, with a bungalow on the Malabar Hill and an accent to match the cut of his Seville Row suits, " emerged on the Indian political scene when he joined the Kaurav party, that is the Congress (136). Despite his allegiance to the party, his views regarding the nationalist movement were different from those of Gingili. "It was as a skilled advocate of a constitutional brief that Karna approached his politics. Not for him the sweaty trudges through the mofussil districts, the mass rallies that Gingili addressed in one or another vernacular ; Karna always elegant and well – groomed, was comfortable only in the language of his education and in the kind of surrounding in which he had acquired it" (137). Thus known for his sophisticated manners and elite background Karna represented a leadership opposed to Gingili and his mass oriented ideals. Probably the first aberration from the Gangaisms which had acquired a normative status for themselves, Karna explicitly revealed his disapproval of Gangaji's mass movement as soon as he realised that the Mahaguru's deep – rooted belief in the Hindu culture and tradition enabled him to exploit Hindu symbols for bringing people together. This realisation on Karna's part was

accompanied by a consciousness of the threat to the Muslim identity due to a rising popularity of Hindu influence. Although Tharoor does not suggest directly that Gingili was in any way responsible for the disaffection between the Hindus and the Muslims, yet he gives clear indications that Gangaji's ideals and principles were inadvertently responsible for alienating political leaders like (Jinnah) Karna from the Kaurav party. He describes Karna's disapproval of Gingili in the following words:

Karna was not much of a Muslim but he found Gingili too much of a Hindu. The Mahaguru's traditional attire, his spiritualism, his spouting of the ancient texts, his ashram, his constant harking back to an idealised pre – British past that Karna did not believe in.... All this made the young man mistrustful of the Great Teacher... And Gangaji's mass politics were, to Karna, based on an appeal to the wrong instincts: they embodied an atavism that in his view would never take the country forward. A Kaurava Party of prayer – meetings and unselective eclecticism was not a party he would have cared to lead, let alone to remain a member of. (142)

Portraying how this intelligent yet selfish leader of the Indians played into the hands of the colonisers Tharoor documents Karan's dislike for Gangaji's views in some of the speeches made by Karan himself.

This party is not going to overthrow the British by leading rabble through the streets.... We cannot hope to rule ourselves

by leading mobs of people who are ignorant of desideratum of self – rule. Populism and demagoguery do not move parliaments my friends. Breaking the law will not help us to make the law one day... In no country in the world do the 'masses' rule ; every nation is run by its leaders, whose learning and intelligence are the best guarantee of its success. I say to my distinguished friends: leave the masses to themselves: Let us not abdicate our responsibility to the party and the cause by placing at our head those unfit to lead us. (138)

Comparing the intelligentsia with the masses, and denouncing the latter as incapable of administration, Karna radically dissents from the Mahaguru's principles, thus marking the beginning of a dilution of Gangaji's political guidelines. These above quoted remarks of Karna however are extremely relevant and significant in the context of the present day Indian polity influenced by India's postcolonial scenario.

Accompanying to these statements made by Karna who at one time was known as an ' ambassador of Hindu – Muslim unity ' was the British government's policy of ' Divide – et – Impera ', that created a communal divide among the Indians (both Hindus and Muslims). While Gingili, despite his idealism and righteousness, inadvertently sowed the seeds of a rejection of his own preachings himself by ignoring and thus alienating Karna from the Kauravas, the British consistently endeavoured to underplay and create hindrances in Gangaji's pursuit of the subcontinent's independence. In fact, the rift between Ganga and Karna ironically helped the British who intended to divide the subcontinent in to pieces. A respected

member of the Kauravas and a rising barrister of the Bombay High Court, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Tharoor's Karna, who believed that freedom could only be achieved by taking recourse to the British constitutional jurisprudence, defected from the Kaurav party which had completely side – lined him as its leader. Hurt by the humiliation he was forced to experience because of Gangaji's non – flexible ideologies, he joined the Muslim League as its president, an act to emphasise his individuality before his compradors. It is therefore observed that India's freedom struggle was corrupted much before her independence, with the focus of her freedom fighters shifting from national well being to their individual interests.

This fractured anti – colonialist movement was further enervated by the colonising techniques adopted by the British, one of them being their ploy of announcing separate electorates for the Muslims. While this declaration of separate electorates marred Gangaji's dream of a united independent India, by evidently creating a sense of division between the two religious communities, it was hailed by Karna, who, after his defection from the Kauravas, had perceived himself as the leader of the Muslims. Like Gingili and the Kaurava party, Karna also wanted the ouster of the British and independence for the subcontinent but his idea of independence was, "Independence without Hindu domination." This statement confirms the considerable success of the colonial tool of the "divide and rule" policy diligently used by the colonisers to thwart a united opposition from the Indians. It is further observed that whereas Karna and his Muslim League's demand could simply mean a demand for equal share in the administration of the country, Dhritrashtra (Nehru) added insult to injury by interpreting it differently. He said:

What he [Karna] really means is the importance of Mohammad Ali Karna, wielding power over at least one part of the country, unobstructed by any one else. (148)

This statement made by Dhritrashtra reveals that the author holds him responsible for giving Karna the idea of a separate nation for the Muslims. In this way, Tharoor subtly suggests that the colonial politics of the Whites had so influenced the native leaders as to obscure the 'real aim' of their endeavours, reducing the entire freedom struggle to a selfish feud between two green eyed individuals.

Thus in *The Great Indian Novel*, Tharoor subtly makes certain pertinent suggestions. He suggests that had it not been for Gangaji's indifference towards Karna's views, and his preference for Dhritrashtra, the demand for Karnistan would have been non-existent. Thus, Tharoor's novel though in an indirect and a far fetched manner suggests that Gingili, who stood for Hindu – Muslim unity throughout his life, ironically emerged as the one responsible for the augmentation of the communal feelings among Muslims resulting in further deterioration in Hindu – Muslim relations. The Mahaguru's temperamental inability to keep politics away from religion was the apparent reason behind the agitated feelings of Karna and his Muslim brethren. The British *raj's* announcement of separate electorates had already given communalism a political platform and therefore a veracity considerably serving the colonialist purpose of the European rulers. Commenting on Tharoor's comprehension and depiction of Mahatma Gandhi's role in the colonial India, Dr. Dhar observes:

It is somewhat ironical that a person who fought all his life for Hindu – Muslim unity

has to be made responsible for encouraging Muslim separatism, but this is implicit in Tharoor's understanding of Gingili and of several historians too.¹⁷

The Great Indian Novel, however, further exemplifies Gangaji's efforts to prevent the partition by trying to convince Dhritrashtra to give Karna free India's first premiership-an act that probably might have averted the partition of the country.

It is pertinent to mention here, that this fictional work produced by Tharoor, owes much of its appeal to the largely unbiased attitude towards events and historical personages. Thus it may be stated that *The Great Indian Novel* also emerges as an effort to destabilise the 'colonial discourse' consisting of ambiguous and crafted facts about India's past. Dhritrashtra's (Nehru's) refusal to conform to Gangaji's (Gandhiji's) suggestion of giving Jinnah, Tharoor's Karna, the first Premiership of free India, forcefully indicts this socialist Indian leader for the genocide and the pogrom that was witnessed as the time of partition. Tharoor also hints that all this happened because of Nehru's lust for power. Having fought for his country's freedom as a follower of Gingili for decades and having striven with the Mahaguru to maintain India's self esteem, Dhritrashtra like Karna suddenly became aware of his 'self' and ambitions. Despite the fact that Gingili had categorically expressed his displeasure before Nehru by saying, "If you agree to break the country you will break my heart", Dhritrashtra obstinately argued: "it will break many hearts Gingili... Mine and all ours included. But we have no other choice." A statement highly ironical, for the alternative was suggested to Dhritrashtra by the Mahaguru himself. The question therefore is: was the partition of the Indian

subcontinent a consequence of a compulsion for Dhritrashtra, or was it a result of his ambitions?

Dhritrashtra's impudence is further ascertained by his use of an unprecedented candour before Gingili forcing the latter to resign and withdraw into the background. Responding to the Mahaguru's insistence that the Kauravas should never give in to the Muslim League's demand for the dismemberment of the country, Dhritrashtra said:

Gingili, we understand how you feel... We have fought by your side for our freedom, all these years. We have imbibed your principles and convictions. You have led us to the brink of victory.... But now the time has come for us to apply our principles in the face of the acid test of reality.... Karna and his friends will simply dig in their heels. Separation or chaos, they will say; and on Direct Action day last year they showed us they can create chaos. How much worse will it be without the British forces here? Might it not be better to agree in advance to a... civilised Partition than to resist and risk destroying everything?(223)

Thus by portending grave consequences to the liberation of an unpartitioned India, Dhritrashtra emerged as another political leader, in Tharoor's work, second only to Karna, who had no compunctions while negating the verdict of the Father of the Nation. The facts, that the marginalised Mahaguru as a result silently withdrew from the activities of his party, and that the Kauravas consented to the partition with Dhritrashtra as their

leader, clearly show the degeneration that had set in the political life of India.

Thus, Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*, a fictionalised historiographical piece illuminates the sad misfortune of India that could not produce another leader of Gangaji's stature. The novel describes the selfish machinations of freedom fighters like the anglicised Karna and Dhritrashtra. As apparent, while Karna had encashed upon his antagonism to Gingili, Dhritrashtra opportunistically inscribed the Mahaguru's aims with his own anglophile opinions thus carving from the latter's ideals an easy access to his goal of India's premiership. This irony of fate that India endured in the person of her first prime minister is fully corroborated by Stanley Wolpert's revelation of Nehru's misplaced anglophilia. In his book *Nehru: A Tryst with Destiny*, Wolpert shows Nehru confiding in John Kenneth Galbraith, the American ambassador: "Galbraith, I am the last Englishman to rule India."¹⁸

True to these words quoted by Wolpert, *The Great Indian Novel* describes Dhritrashtra as the leader of the Kauravas who betrayed Gangaji's faith and trust as soon as a liberated India was born. Thus, laying weak foundations of his infant country, Dhritrashtra emerged as an inadvertent accomplice of the colonisers, enabling them to amputate the great country India into Hindustan and Pakistan. Tharoor further, highlights Dhritrashtra's complicity with the British by foregrounding the illegitimate relations he had with the Viceroy's wife. This relationship is actually described by Tharoor as a successful consequence of the vulpine machinations resorted to by the European colonisers.

Representing India's last Viceroy Lord Mountbatten as Viscount Drewpad, *The Great Indian Novel* further expatiates on the clever manipulations of the British by revealing Drewpad's immoral ingenuity of using his wife as one of the

many subjugating ploys of the colonisers. Viscount Drewpad's intentions become evident in his words to his wife, "You're an essential part of my plans, darling.... We've got to charm these humourless fellows into being more accommodating. You're my secret weapon," (125). As portrayed by Tharoor in the novel, the result of this clandestine relationship was a daughter named Draupadi Mokrasi or D. Mokrasi, representing the Indian Democracy.

The author's purpose behind the elucidation of Dhritrashtra's relations with Drewpad's wife followed by the birth of D. Mokrasi; is to question the moral uprightness of the country's first premier. In fact, Tharoor's depiction of Dhritrashtra or Nehru as one enamoured of the beauty of a White lady and as the father of D. Mokrasi born of Drewpad's wife, suggests volumes about Dhritrashtra's so called independent socialistic opinions, which were actually dominated by his anglophile proclivities. These indirect suggestions made by Tharoor are reinforced by Nehru's insistence upon adopting a parliamentary type of government for liberated India, similar to that of Britain, instead of a presidential type. Revealing his inherent genuflections for the European colonisers of his land, historians and political analysts have interrogated Nehru's rejection of Clement Atlee's proposal of a presidential system of governance on the lines of the U. S., as a model for independent India. While Nehru, out of his anglophile delusion felt that the "British system was the only real one for democracies", and opted for the same, Ciement Atlee noted: "I had the feeling that they [Nehru and his followers] thought I was offering them margarine instead of butter."¹⁹

This provides an emphatic evidence of the British influence on the postcolonial mindset of the Indian leadership. Both the partition of the sub – continent and a continuity of a

British style of governance in free India were an important and insidious part of their colonial plans, operationalised under the Viceroyalty of the likes of Viscount Drowpad.

Thus, Shashi Tharoor audaciously incriminates Jawaharlal Nehru's ingrained sycophancy for the British as evidenced by the words quoted by Wolpert. Interrogating the veracity of Nehru's patriotic fervour, the novel unveils his 'postmodern nationalism'. Despite being the first premier of free India, Nehru- Tharoor's Dhritrashtra- established himself as an essential dissembler, in *The Great Indian Novel* by worshipping the imperialists he had fought against for many years, defeating the very purpose of thousands of Indian freedom fighters led by Gandhi, his political mentor. This unscrupulous spiritual downfall of Nehru's integrity and his genuflections for his British compradors unequivocally present him as complicitous with the occidental colonising powers. Radically incongruent to his much promulgated ambition of procuring respect and equality for his country, his facile acceptance of a subservient status for his people vis á vis the British, and his complicity in laying down the weak foundations for his country as a mere outgrowth 'an illegitimate' child of the west – the Viscerine – are apparently worth indictment when considered from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's postcolonial point of view. By consciously acceding to the appellation of the 'third world' or 'marginal' for India, Nehru advertently supported the occidentalist claims of superiority relegating his mother land to a sub category perceived as inferior, thus categorically confirming Bhaba's theory of 'fixity'. In fact Nehru's portrayal in *The Great Indian Novel* by Tharoor clearly and perfectly substantiates Anthony Appiah's cynical approbation with Spivak. Appiah avers: "... postcoloniality is the condition of what we might ungenerously call a comprador intelligentsia a relatively small, western-trained group of writers and thinkers,

who mediated the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery." ²⁰

The relationship between Edwina Mountbatten and the Indian democracy established by Tharoor in the novel is actually an allusion to the Indian nation's eternal dependence on a white lady. This relationship between a First World woman belonging to the colonial period, and her daughter, a denizen of the Third World, in the postcolonial times, emphasises the continuity of India's colonialism into her postcolonial era. Evidently this blood relation between the colonial and the postcolonial scenarios in the book attests to the popular contention that postcolonialism is not a reaction against colonialism, but is its consequence. Aijaz Ahmed expresses a similar view when he says that "'colonialism'... becomes a trans-historical thing always present and always in a process of dissolution in one part of the world or another."²¹

It is further observed that *The Great Indian Novel* is replete with various instances and episodes that force its readers to contemplate the differences between genuine or 'pure' and manipulated or 'political' knowledge. Taking cognisance of the orientalised knowledge given by the Western colonisers to their subjects, Edward W. Said had demanded for a distinction between 'pure' and 'political' knowledge and Tharoor's novel gives veracity to Said's interpretations. Shaped and controlled by the subjugating tendencies of the orientalising powers from the west, this orientalised knowledge according to Said "was not 'disinterested' knowledge although much of it operated under that guise."²² Thus, suggesting volumes about the recent Indian history *The Great Indian Novel* makes revelations about the protagonists of the freedom movement.

Tharoor's novel emerges as a consummate exemplification of the persistence of British colonialism, in the

liberated and free India. Tharoor's fiction explicitly reveals that while before the 15th August, 1947, the country was exploited by aliens, after independence she was forced to suffer at the hands of her own leaders.

Gingili, Tharoor's much eulogised hero of the novel, who had non-violently shaken the mighty British empire to its foundations has been criticised by historians for not making use of his weapon of 'Fast unto Death' to prevent the partition of the subcontinent. Having withdrawn from the political scene at the time of the partition and the Independence in 1947, Gingili was murdered by Nathu Ram Godse, represented by 'Shikhandi' in the novel. While in the novel Shikhandi, who was actually Amba with a changed sex and name, killed Gingili so as to avenge the wrong done to him by the latter; Nathu Ram Godse murdered Mahatma Gandhi for he felt that the latter had cheated him and the nation. Tharoor's Shikhandi not only expressed his personal reasons for killing Gingili, but also echoed those of Nathu Ram Godse's, Gandhi's assassin. In both cases the much eulogised victim had been disappointing and disgusting. Whereas Tharoor's Shikhandi assassinated the Mahaguru due to personal vengeance, Nathu Ram Godse seemed to do so in national interest. He perceived Gandhi to be unjust in forcing the Indian government to give fifty five crores of rupees to Pakistan at a time when the latter had invaded India in Kashmir, since that money could be apparently used by Pakistan to purchase weapons for fighting Indian forces. "The Government's Action" writes Dr. Ishwary Prasad "...in freezing 55 crores of rupees payable to Pakistan as a retaliatory measure for its open attack upon Kashmir was not to the liking of Gandhi. He went on a fast unto death, and broke it only when the government of India handed over the frozen assets of 55 crores to the Pakistan Government."²³ Gandhi's justification for the fast, perhaps, was not acceptable to Godse,

who like many others, especially the Hindus “had begun to doubt the wisdom of his [Gandhi’s] dabbling in politics, when the Hindu – Muslim question was no longer communal but had become international.”²⁴ Tharoor depicts the Mahaguru dying with the words “I... have... failed,” on his lips (234).

Ironically, perhaps none knew at that time that the principles and ideals of Gandhi were being manipulated by Viscount Drewpad who stands for Mountbatten, the then Viceroy of India. This piece of information is provided by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre in their book *Mountbatten and the Partition of India*, which is a collection of the erstwhile viceroy’s interviews. Responding to one of the questions posed to him, Mountbatten narrated how he convinced Gandhi into forcing the Indian government to pay Pakistan their frozen assets, at the crucial time of a war between the two countries:

... I then sent for Gandhi and I told him “Now you are going to lend your name to a permanent piece of sheer dishonesty. By pure coincidence they [Indians] happen to have, in Delhi, the actual physical balances belonging to Pakistan. Are you going to agree to this? Rob them of a hundred million or several hundred million pounds? ”

“No”, he said.

I said, “How are you going to do it?” He said, “I shall fast unto death until they give the balances over.”

And I got up and shook him by hand, and said, “I congratulate you.” My point is, I utilised Gandhi whose power was immense to force him to force the government of India to dispose of these sterling balances, without

which they would have been regarded as scoundrels.”²⁵

This revelation by Mountbatten, highlights how the frail little man Gandhi possessing an immense amount of intelligence and prowess, was unable to fathom Mountbatten's intentions and colonial inclinations that made the latter toy with the ' ideals ' which had brought the British imperialism to an end. This episode is also an exemplification of the perseverance with which the White coloniser continues to pursue his endeavours to play with the naïve and innocent people of India. Further, Gandhi despite all his achievements emerges as one who emotionally blackmails the Indian government by obstinately adhering to the ideals he had adopted for the goal of freedom.

In *The Great Indian Novel* itself, Tharoor brilliantly showcases the ironies of life of his frail little Mahatma. Although the leader of the struggle for independence, Gingili was the only one who was the most unhappy person on the 15th of August, 1947. It was so because this sweet fruit of freedom was accompanied by the sourness of the amputation of the motherland. After about three decades of perseverance and persistence, Gingili witnessed a dismemberment of his goals and principles, various pieces of which seemed irrecoverable, in the face of a partitioned and independent India. No doubt rewarded with his much aspired for freedom, Gangaji's success was ironically undermined and presented to him as nectar served in a sieve.

Thus, Tharoor seems to suggest that while Gingili in an effort to justify his title of Mahaguru inadvertently played into the hands of the colonisers, towards the end of his career, Dhritrashtra aspiring to emulate the British rulers, consciously resorted to the colonisers' ways of thought and governance, bereft of their vicious and colonial intensions. Proudly

perceiving himself as the last English ruler of India, Dhritrashtra's immature and self obsessed decisions laid fragile foundations for the Indian polity of the future generations. Thus possessed by the aims concentrating on his personal self, and accompanied by the likes of Kanika Menon (Krishna Menon) Dhritrashtra proved to be free India's first Premiere who not only lacked sight, but also insight into the future. While referring to this anglicised blind socialist, Tharoor remarks:

I have often wondered what might have happened had he been able to see the world around him as the rest of us can. Might India's history have been different today?
(41)

This statement by Tharoor carries great significance with regard to what he thinks of the first prime minister of India. While Dhritrashtra was physically blind, Nehru was metaphorically so, for he was unable to comprehend the realities of the politics of his day.

A subject of Gangaji's special favours, Dhritrashtra at the very outset of his career had overshadowed his brother Pandu, Tharoor's representation of Subhash Chander Bose. Thus always supported by Gangaji's wisdom, Dhritrashtra, who did not have to undergo the sweat, the toil, and the hard work which the rest of the Kauravas like Pandu had to experience, led his party and his country by dint of his sophistication and shallow cunning. This shallowness of his nature, evident in his vacillating tendencies, frequently flawed Dhritrashtra's career, as he committed major errors of judgement during his tenure as the country's first Prime Minister.

The greatest beneficiary of Gangaji's grass-roots counsel Dhritrashtra evidenced his West oriented mindset throughout

his career, in the form of blunders. Highlighting his nocuous neglect of the rural sector at the cost of funding heavy industry, thus ignoring the fundamental needs of the common man, Tharoor satirically exclaims:

The British had neglected village education in their efforts to produce a limited literate class of petty clerks to turn the lower wheels of their bureaucracy, so we too neglected the villagers in our efforts to widen that literate class for their new places at the top.

Further, Dhritrashtra's disastrous and unnecessary referral of the first India – Karnistan war over Kashmir, Tharoor's Manimir, being placed before the United Nations indicts him as India's blind premier lacking political vision.

There were many principalities in British India which had their own Maharajas and Nawabs. The British had quite unequivocally explained to their Princes that they were free to choose the country they desired to join, and sign an instrument of accession. Most of the states, with the exception of one or two, made their choices according to the dictates of geography. One of the states, which hoped to remain independent, and therefore neither acceded to Karnistan nor to Hindustan, was Manimir. A majority of the population of the state was Muslim, while the Maharaja himself was a Hindu. It was in the interest of the Indian leaders to have Manimir as a part of India, for with its inclusion in the Indian democracy, they could justify their secular claims and disprove Karna's 'two nation theory'. However, Dhritrashtra had the apprehension that Sheikh Azaruddin, leader of the Manimir National Congress would be forced by the Muslim fanatics to break his ties with the Kauravas and so Manimir would merge with Karnistan.

Fortunately, the Karnistanis attacked Manimir, and the Maharaja was forced to accede to India. Tharoor's description of the Maharaja's promiscuity under the grave circumstances of the Karnistani attack, in the presence of Vidur, the Minister for Integration, is a bathetic treatment of a crucial episode of Indian history. The fact that the Maharaja, Vyabhchar Singh signed the instrument of accession simply on the insistence of the ladies in his bed, not only undermines the gravity of this historical event, but also problematises the historical details on which Tharoor has based his narrative.

Historians generally believe that instead of the Maharaja, as shown by Tharoor in his fictionalised historical story, it was Nehru who caused delay in the signing of the instrument. According to them, as soon as the Pakistani forces attacked Kashmir, the Maharaja had sent his wazir to Delhi, requesting the Indian government to give military aid to Kashmir, against the Pakistanis, while in return Kashmir would accede to India. Nehru, the then prime minister of India, kept the wazir waiting in Delhi for three days, while Pakistan's forces moved into Kashmir. Nehru agreed to help Kashmir only after the Maharaja appointed Sheikh Abdullah as the prime minister of Kashmir. Moreover when the Indian Army was steadily and successfully pushing back the enemy, a ceasefire was announced by the United Nations. Jawahar Lal Nehru had decided to go to the U.N.O., a decision that earned him the utter disdain of the people of India, including Tharoor, for years to come. In *The Great Indian Novel*, Tharoor suggest that Nehru had acted in accordance with the instigations of the Vicereine, and had taken an absurd decision for which India has to pay to the present day.

Another significant event in Dhritrashtra's tenure as the prime minister of India was China's invasion of India. Before this, under the influence of Kanika Menon, his defence

minister, Dhritrashtra had ordered his forces to take over Comea (Goa) which was ruled by the Portuguese. Tharoor's novel in fact not only describes the pathetic degradation of India's political leadership in the postcolonial times in the person of Dhritrashtra, but also through the portrayal of Kanika Menon's character. The latter who had convinced Dhritrashtra to attack Comea, also exemplified a lack of maturity in his political vision, for this invasion of Comea was taken by China as an example for itself (301). Thus Menon indirectly became instrumental in the triggering of the Chinese invasion of the young and innocent India, an assault from which she has been unable to recover completely, even after sixty years of her independence. Dhritrashtra's slogan "Hindi – Chini Bhai Bhai" was thus forced down the drain with this invasion which ended on the basis of a unilateral ceasefire. Dr. Dhar comments:

Tharoor's main complaint against Nehru is that at the cost of neglecting the needs of his country, he directed his energies towards gaining recognition in the international fora. He worked for promoting non – alignment without estimating whether the country was strong and powerful enough to give it any meaningful credibility. In a sarcastic tone, the narrator states that he and his friend Menon 'developed into a fine art the skill of speaking for the higher conscience of mankind,' though 'neither could control the convictions or even the conduct of those who were to implement their policies.'

This is reflected most conspicuously in his failure on the foreign front, when the country had to suffer military humiliation at

the hands of China. This broke his heart and hastened his death.²⁶

Commenting on the Chinese invasion of India, Lord Mountbatten once said:

Menon did the most frightful thing to Nehru: because Krishna Menon, who was the Minister of Defence, actually got this invasion of Goa linked up without Nehru understanding or knowing about it, and then faced him almost with a *fait accompli*, and he had to approve or else be held up as the man who was going against popular clamour.... in forcing Nehru to bless the invasion of Goa, he destroyed him, not only his credibility, his prestige, his reputation, but he destroyed his faith in himself, for he felt that he had been betrayed. And he later killed him with the disastrous Chinese war.²⁷

Kanika Menon's poetic treatise on administrative skills, reeking with justification for the use of unscrupulous and cunning means, is another blemish on Indian polity after independence. Since Priya Duryodhani (Indira Gandhi) had overheard this immoral treatise on governance, therefore Menon can also be held responsible for initiating the corruption of the Indian democracy during the former's era as prime minister. This clearly reveals that the seeds of degeneration and corruption permeated quite early into the sixty year long lineage of Indian polity.

After Dhritrashtra, Shishu Pal or Shastri was elevated to the status of the Indian prime minister, a status which proved

to be the cause of the undoing of this good, decent and well meaning politician. Worthy of encomiums for the steadfastness he revealed during India's second war with Karnistan, Shishu Pal's forces won a large territory of the Muslim country. Unfortunately however, he signed a wrong treaty at the wrong time, giving back all the territory, won during the war, to Karnistan, thus killing himself with self-reproach and guilt. Consequently Priya Duryodhani, Dhritrashtra's daughter took over the chair of the prime minister of India.

At this juncture in the story Tharoor gives a candid and an unequivocal expression to the declining ethics of Indian polity, which was gradually shifting its focus from the nation to the politician. While arguing in favour of Priya Duryodhani's suitability for the premier's chair, Tharoor's narrator justifies before his friends from the Kaurav party:

We want a Prime Minister with certain limitations, a Prime Minister who is no more than a minister, a Prime Minister who will decorate the office, rally the support of the people at large and let us run the country. None of us can play that role as well as Priya Duryodhani can.... And if we ever decide we have had enough of her – well she is only a woman. (318)

Duryodhani, however, never allowed herself to be pawned around by her colleagues. An arrogant lady, she consistently negated the importance of her Deputy prime minister Yudhisthir (Morarji Desai) and repeatedly humiliated him forcing him to resign his post. Subsequent to this cunning and quiet ouster of her most visibly powerful rival from her government, Duryodhani meticulously embarked upon the mission of

promoting her own goals. Eulogising her father's socialist ideals and his sacrifices before the common masses she held some of the Kaurava's responsible for the decay of his principles. Thus exhorting the "progressive" and the "like minded" to join her and restructure the Kaurava party, Duryodhani introduced Ashwasthaman (Ashoka Mehta) into the Indian polity. In connivance with Ashwasthaman she stopped the privy purses of the ex – Maharajas of various states breaching the idealism and the morals punctiliously followed by the Kaurava party and its members.

Further proving to be a Frankenstein for the Kauravas, Duryodhani crossed the limits of her position by interpreting the role of India's president as one who is supposed to assist the Prime Minister. Thus prompted by arrogance and greed for power, Duryodhani acquired a nearly despotic stance for herself and did not hesitate to nominate her own candidate for the country's highest position – the President. This insolence on Duryodhani's part caused a political turmoil actuating a division of the Kaurav party that had laid the foundation of a free India. Kaurava (R) or Real led by Priya Duryodhani completely overshadowed the Kaurava (O) or Old guard belonging to the veterans. Describing the fate of D. Mokراسي (the Indian democracy) at this juncture, Tharoor writes:

...Draupadi Mokراسي was diagnosed as asthmatic, her breath coming in short gasps, the dead air trapped in her bronchia struggling to expel itself, her chest heaving with the effort to breathe freely... (352)

Priya Duryodhani's popularity among the Indian masses increased commendably with the third war between India and Karnistan, categorically won by the former, liberating East

Karnistan, and creating the independent country of Bangladesh, Tharoor's Galebi Desh.

However, Duryodhani with time evolved into a perfect autocrat, (similar to Duryodhan in *Mahabharata* who humiliated Draupadi) who imposed a siege (Emergency) on the Indian democracy, represented by Draupadi Mokrasi in the novel. This decision of hers to impose a siege over the country, arresting her opponents, censoring the press, indulging in corrupt practices and playing truant with the norms of the constitution, is represented by Tharoor as an effort to molest the sanctity of the democracy or D. Mokrasi. Thus true to her archetypal name Priya Duryodhani committed the crime of blemishing Draupadi, the young Indian democracy.

The imposition of a siege jeopardised Duryodhani's autocratic rule over India and brought the Janta Morcha led by Yudhishtir and formulated by Jayaprakash Drona (Jayaprakash Narayan) to power. However, the Morcha could not retain its popularity for long and Priya Duryodhani re-emerged as the country's leader simply because India could not produce a better alternative. Dr. Dhar states:

With the coming to power of Mrs. Gandhi, the narrative brings to an end the story of India's political vicissitudes. Its thrust is to suggest Tharoor's disillusionment with the country's declining political culture. Its institutional structures, such as the press, bureaucracy, and party system have not much in promoting any meaningful change in the country. Tharoor makes us believe that the Indian people in general have perfected the art of living with whatever they get, strengthening their vestiges of fatalism. He visualises a

bleak future for the country. This partially explains why people have become obsessive about their past. For some it is a source of power, for others a comfortable retreat.²⁸

The Great Indian Novel thus surfaces as a text elucidating the decadence of the Indian polity at length, debilitating the country and perversely affecting her people. Immediately after independence, the obvious degradation in the morals of the leadership accompanied by an increase in the frequency with which they compromised their selfless values, snowballed into the emergency or siege imposed by Priya Duryodhani on the Indian D. Mokrasi. Thus Tharoor's disillusioned enumeration of the political upheavals in free India exemplifies the gradual process through which, India after the end of British colonialism was subjected to the colonial mentality and mindset of her own leaders. Giving credence to Gyan Prakash's view (which highlights the absence of a panoptic distance between the colonial and the postcolonial), Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*, portrays that both in the colonial and the postcolonial era, India and her citizens have always suffered. While earlier the likes of Richard and Heaslop had wreaked their colonial ire over them under the British *raj*; Priya Duryodhani accompanied by her corrupt band of ministers betrayed the free citizens of India by imposing a siege over the country in the postcolonial era. This tragic irony of fate victimising the Indian democracy has been unequivocally described by Tharoor in the following words:

We Indians... are so good at respecting outward forms while ignoring the substance. We took the forms of parliamentary democracy, preserved them on a pedestal

and paid them due obeisance. But we ignored the basic fact that parliamentary democracy can only work if those who run it are constantly responsive to the people, and if the parliamentarians are qualified to legislate. Neither condition was fulfilled in India for long.... Today most people are simply aware of their own irrelevance to the process. They see themselves standing hopelessly on the margins while the professional politicians and the unprofessional parliamentarians combine to run the country to the ground.... What we have done is to betray the challenge of modern democracy. (371)

These words highlight the nation's career in native hands. Much against the expectations of the people of the newly formed democracy India's sufferings and ailments were ironically aggravated by her own children. In pursuit of power they not only made the wrong decisions at the wrong times, but also reduced her independent and democratic entity to an irrelevant existence.

This is in keeping with Bran Nicol's inference that "a postmodern politics is one which is less *about* anything (like emancipation, improving the wealth of the nation, the standard of living, democracy etc.) than simply preserving power through image making and manipulation. Postmodern politics is the politics of gesture, theatre, art—the implication being that the audience can be seduced into swallowing the illusion wholesale, as we do it in the theatre."²⁹

Thus by portraying the emergence of 'native – colonisers', of India in the postcolonial period of her history,

Tharoor problematizes and destabilises the normative concepts of colonialism which categorically differentiate between the coloniser and the native. *The Great Indian Novel* also emerges as one of those postcolonial texts which not only italicise the inheritance of a colonial literature by the natives, but also underlines how the foreign coloniser's concept of 'the self' and 'the other' has evolved into the native politician's theory of the 'individual self' and the 'national other'.

It is therefore observed that through his novel Shashi Tharoor clearly emphasises that though the Indians have enjoyed the fruits of freedom since long, they have proved to be incapable of ruling a land as splendid as theirs. He thus ironically seems to concur with similar views expressed by the White colonisers of the country who had completely marginalised the Indian natives in the country's administration.

Thus an exquisite recreation of the modern history in the context of the ancient past, Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* makes use of an innovative and suggestive yet forceful technique of writing. The author uses a postmodern form of expression endeavouring to create ripple effects, in which a slight allusion gives multiple meanings. For instance he describes Viscount Drewpad as "supercilious and superficial," and Gingili in the profound statement: "while he was alive he was impossible to ignore, once he had gone, he was impossible to imitate" (47). A similar method is adopted by him in the novel to deal with the partition of the subcontinent. Historians have always believed that the British went about the whole process of partition in indecent haste, ignoring its human dimensions. As described in *The Great Indian Novel*, the nitty-gritty of the process of partitioning the country was left to one Mr. Nicholas "a political geographer who had never in his life set foot on any of the territories he was to award either to India or to the new state of Karnistan," Mr. Nicholas has no time to make a

distinction between the “lines” that he draws on the map and the “lives” which would inevitably be affected by those lines. Briefly yet emphatically making this point in the novel, Shashi Tharoor refers to it in a characteristically postmodern style replete with playfulness:

You [Nicholas] have just succeeded in putting your international border through the middle of the market, giving the rice – fields to Karnistan and the warehouse to India, the largest pig – farm in the zilla to the Islamic states and the Madrassah of the Holy Prophet to the country the Muslims are leaving. Oh, and if I understand that squiggle there correctly... the schoolmaster will require a passport to go to the loo between the classes. (224 – 225)

The acerbic yet humourous satire evidenced in the above quotation, is used by Shashi Tharoor generously in the entire novel. By extensively using this satirical mode of narration in *The Great Indian Novel* Tharoor has succeeded in communicating his ideas and notions more effectively to his readers. Similarly satire is also used by him in a playful, farcical manner in his reference to certain political characters. He calls Nehru as the “unseeing visionary”, names Priyadarshani Indira Gandhi as ‘Priya Duryodhani’, and calls Zuifiquar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan as “Zalil Shah Jhootha’ of ‘Karnistan’. The same playfulness is visible in christening ‘Dandi March’ as ‘Mango March’. Expressing his views on the use of satire, Tharoor remarks:

If you are treating issues that are sacrilegious, it's difficult, unless you are being crassly provocative, to find a terribly different way of looking at these things. In one sense or the other there is a lot of hagiography about the Indian Nationalist heroes for instance; there is a great deal of reverence for the ancient epics. Satire, on the other hand, enables you to recast and to reinvent both the epics and history – the great ideas, and the great stories, and the great men or women for that matter – of these times, in a light that is so unfamiliar that it immediately provokes a fresh way of looking at them. And that is why satire is very useful.

There is a second element... "If you want to edify, you have to entertain." So your duty as a writer is to amuse people enough that they want to read the serious points you want to make.³⁰

It may also be added that Shashi Tharoor has an excellent command over puns that are brilliantly used in his novel. They not only enable him to instruct but also enhance his capability of providing information along with entertainment through his fiction. The entertaining strain abundantly observed in *The Great Indian Novel*, is further stressed by the farcical and playful attitude adopted by Tharoor throughout the course of the narrative. This non – serious postmodern stance in the novel is explicitly evidenced in Tharoor's description of Drona's death as a consequence of the false news of Ashwasthama's death. Parodying the same episode in Vyas's *Mahabharata*,

Tharoor bathetically narrates how Yudhishtir maintained his honesty by naming a cockroach as Ashwasthama and killing it. This parodic representation of one of the most crucial events marking the battle at Kurukshetra in the *Mahabharata* in which Ashwasthama, the elephant dies, and the news of his death is reported to Drona by Yudhishtir, is an unequivocal exemplification of a playfulness in the technique of the novel, undermining the gravity of the ages old serious episode. Since this non-serious and playful treatment is all pervasive in *The Great Indian Novel*, therefore it will not be wrong to state that by appropriately and dexterously using postmodern technique of writing, Shashi Tharoor not only uses Ved Vyas's *Mahabharata* but also destabilises it.

The narrative technique of *The Great Indian Novel* is another significant aspect of this postmodern text. A first person narrative, the novel is generally cast in a series of monologues of the narrator, Ved Vyas, who dictates his story to Ganapathi, his amanuensis. Despite the fact that the communication between V.V. and Ganapathi is usually one – sided, with the former speaking most of the time, and Ganapathi not voicing more than a few sentences, the novel diligently records the latter's reactions and expressions in the course of V.V.'s narrative. The narrative, therefore, is more or less similar to the telephonic conversation with the interlocutor's voice inaudible.

Ved Vyas, the narrator, appears to be an incarnation of time. He appears to be ageless in the novel and instead of dying towards the end he merely abandons the scene. Secondly, he also refers to his legs as "my ageless legs" exemplifying the author's suggestive style of writing. Ganapathi's individuality is established, not only simply by the mention of his name, but also by the description given by Ved Vyas. According to V.V., Ganapathi, a South Indian, with a big

nose was a man of few words possessing "shrewd and intelligent eyes." His "elephantine tread, broad forehead" and "enormous trunk" impressed the narrator immensely and the latter instantly developed a liking for his scribe. This portrayal of Ganapathi, especially as a South Indian, by Tharoor, seems to be an obvious allusion to C. Rajagopalachari, the author of the translated version of *The Mahabharata*.

The portrayal of the narrator of the novel as Ved Vyas, with Ganapathi as his amanuensis (both intimately associated with the *Mahabharata*) at the very outset of the novel, gives the novelist adequate means to bridge the gap between the political and the mythical history of the subcontinent, and provides them with the same platform by drawing parallels between the two.

Thus highlighting that the essential nature of humanity remains the same, and history repeats itself, *The Great Indian Novel* has a circular narrative. Envisaging two diverse histories of the subcontinent, irrespective of the gap of thousands of years between them, *The Great Indian Novel* ingeniously brings them together alluding to the eternal veracity of the tale by using a circular narrative. This circular nature of Tharoor's narrative in *The Great Indian Novel* is further evidenced by the fact that he perceives history from diverse points of view and in the end V.V., the narrator, decides to retell the entire tale once again from a completely different perspective.

The 'relativist' stance of *The Great Indian Novel* manifest in its unfinished and circular narrative provides the book with unstable and shifting interpretations characteristic of postmodernism. The smooth surface of Tharoor's narrative is ironically dismantled by the narrator V.V. himself, who remarks:

... my last dream, Ganapathi, leaves me with
a far more severe problem. If it means

anything, anything at all, it means that I have told my story so far from a completely mistaken perspective. I have thought about it, Ganapathi, and I realise I have no choice. I must retell it. (418)

Further, the reader is repeatedly reminded of the fictiveness of the work, because of the non serious and playful attitude of Tharoor. Satirically parodying various historical and mythical events in his *The Great Indian Novel*, to produce a comic effect, Tharoor problematises and undermines the gravity of both the *Mahabharata* and the Indian political history. instances varying from Gangaji's attempts to test his stoic austerity in the beginning of the novel through the description of Pandu's licentiousness just before his death; to the portrayal of Vyabhchar Singh's over powering libidinous demeanour at a time of national crises, and several such others distort and destabilise both Ved Vayas's epic and Indian history. They continually remind us that *The Great Indian Novel* is 'only' a work of fiction, since the world it portrays is 'not' the real world that it resembles, establishing it as a postmodern fiction.

It is observed that Tharoor has consistently used 'micro-narratives' in the novel destabilising and problematising two 'grand' or 'meta-narratives' of India (*Mahabharata* and the Indian National Movement) by constantly recycling images from them. Thus essentially depicting India's colonial and post-colonial scenarios, *The Great Indian Novel* is not only an amalgam of the 'fabulative' and the 'problematic' aspects of postmodern literature.

Consequently, betraying its classification as a 'novel' or 'work', this novel by Tharoor comes close to Roland Barthes concept of 'textuality' referring to its condition of being a postmodern text, a source of endless interpretations, as well as

amenable to Derrida's deconstruction. Thus a 'polysemic' and 'pluralist' text, *The Great Indian Novel* deserves various readings, from various perspectives. This enables this text to acquire the stature similar to that of a 'grand' or a 'meta – narrative'.

Equating characters from divergent pasts, the allegorical representations in *The Great Indian Novel* are outstanding exemplifications of Baudrillard's theories of 'Appropriation' or 'simulation'. Tharoor not only juxtaposes the protagonists of Vyasa's *Mahabharata* with those of the recent Indian history but also allegorises and represents different pillars of administration and governance in independent India through Vyas's protagonists. Probably the best instance of a 'simulacrum' or 'simulation' is Draupadi Mokrasi of *The Great Indian Novel*. Representing the Indian democracy in the incarnated form of Miss. D. Mokrasi who suffered at the hands of Priya Duryodhani, Tharoor's novel considerably substantiates Baudrillard's theory. Such examples of 'simulations' are also evidenced in Tharoor's allegorical personifications of India's armed forces as Bhim, the press as Arjun, and the bureaucracy and the foreign services as Nakul and Sahdev respectively. Thus Tharoor's appropriations and allegories in *The Great Indian Novel* convincingly justify the post – modern concept that society has become a simulation of itself.

Tharoor's acknowledgement in the 'Afterword' regarding the all pervasive influence of Ved Vyas's epic *Mahabharata* on his *The Great Indian Novel*, is an apparent revelation of his nostalgic proclivities towards his ancient culture, thus forcing him to envisage its reflections in the novel by using the postmodern concepts of 'pastiche' and 'parody'. He not only embarks upon a contextual and lengthy analysis of the episodes delineated in the *Mahabharata*, unequivocally

imitating the recognisable style of the epic, but also takes the sub – continent's Modern history into its fold with a deft stroke of parody. It is therefore observed that extremely close to its origins, Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* is an intelligent piece of literary art that substantiates Jameson's belief that since it may not be possible for a writer to make/create new and profound statements always, it is justified that he takes existing forms – in this case the ancient and the recent pasts – apart and recombines the pieces in an enterprising way.

In conclusion, it may be said that Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* is an outstanding postcolonial text abounding in the use of postmodern techniques of inversion, distortion, parody and pastiche. Audaciously intertextual, farcical, satirical and eclectic, this masterpiece of Indian writing in English – emerges as an Indian political potpourri, brilliantly mythified by its author.

Notes

¹ K.M. Munshi, preface, *Mahabharata*, by C.Rajagopalachari (Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1978) 2.

² C.R. Deshpande, epigraph, *The Great Indian Novel*, by Shashi Tharoor (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1989).

³ C.Rajagopalachari, *Mahabharata* (Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1978) 4.

⁴ Harry Kreisler, "In Conversation with Shashi Tharoor," 10 Apr. 2003 <<http://www.shashitharoor.com/interviews/berkeley.html>>.

⁵ M.K. Naik and Shyamala A. Narayan, *Indian English Literature 1980 - 2000: A Critical Survey: Midnight's Children: Novel II* (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2001) 47 - 48.

⁶ Shashi Tharoor, *The Great Indian Novel*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1989) 1. Subsequent references are to this edition and are parenthetically incorporated in the text.

⁷ Harry Kreisler.

⁸ Gyan Prakash, "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism," *American Historical Review* 99 (December, 1994) 1475.

⁹ Jean Paul Sartre, preface, *The Wretched of the Earth*, by Franz Fanon (England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967) 13.

¹⁰ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967) 252.

¹¹ Ishwari Prasad and S.K. Subedar, *A History of Modern India 1740 - 1950* (Allahabad: The Indian Press Ltd. 1951) 406.

¹² Prasad and Subedar 410.

¹³ T.L. Sharma, *Hindu - Muslim Relations in All India Politics, 1913 - 1925* (Delhi: BR. Publishing Corporation, 1987) 103-104.

¹⁴ T.L. Sharma 104.

¹⁵ Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) 32.

¹⁶ T.N. Dhar, *History-Fiction Interface in Indian English Novel* (New Delhi: Prestige, 1999) 221.

¹⁷ Dhar 222.

¹⁸ C.J.S Walia, rev. of *India: From Midnight to Millenium* by Shashi Tharoor, 8 Jan. 2007 <<http://www.shashitharoor.com/reviews/cjswalia.html>>.

¹⁹ Walia.

²⁰ Anthony Appiah, "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?" *Critical Inquiry* 17 (Winter, 1991) 348.

²¹ Aijaz Ahmed, "The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality," *Race and Class* 36.3 (1995) 9.

²² Padmini Mongia, ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory* (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1996) 4.

²³ Prasad and Subedar 473.

²⁴ Prasad and Subedar 474.

²⁵ Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *Mountbatten and the Partition of India* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1997) 52.

²⁶ Dhar 224.

²⁷ Collins and Lapierre 46.

²⁸ Dhar 227.

²⁹ Bran Nicol, ed., *Postmodernism and The Contemporary Novel: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd., 2003) 3.

³⁰ Harry Kreisler.