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Critical study of Sashi Tharoor's work

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The Great Indian Novel takes on the entire subcontinent beginning with India under British in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century down to India post Emergency period. It covers all the major political historical event of the twentieth century –the events of national freedom movement like the Champaran Satyagrah, the Dandi March, the Round Table conference and the Quit India Movement along with the events of the partition, India's independent, the wars with china and Pakistan, the liberation of Goa, the Emergency and after. Writing about The Great Indian Novel, Sashi Tharoor sets out his intention: "The great Indian novel" speaks for an India of multiple realities and multiple interpretation of reality. Throughout the novel runs an acknowledgement of the multiplicity of truth that has given shape and substance to the idea of India. But these realities about India conveniently fall into the categories of good and bad, transitory and lasting, wishful and undesirable. The India Tharoor talks of is as much a product of virtues as vices, and demonstration in their consummation a purpose of enlightenment, and awareness of the pit full that could have been avoided to preempt the process of the big events like the partition and the Emergency. India, as now, emerged in the freedom struggle, when various strands of social, political and cultural consciousness converged. It was a heroic mass struggle against an alien power structure, which subjugated India on the plea of trade. As this common colonial enemy is defeated, and the power is to be inherited, shared and administered, enemy from within disrupts and divided. This strange reality un-folding the inner self of man, impacts a value or creed to every calling, which culminates in the realization of momentary identity rather than the eternal. The process of being together is forgotten for the products of self serving ends. The light value of human existence is ever going, and the need to suppose and sustain how best the worst could be avoided is somewhat basic in the history of mankind as underscored here.

"Many of the character, incidents and issues in this novel are based on," states Tharoor in the Afterword, the people and events described in great epic Mahabharata, a work which remains a perennial source of delight and inspiration to millions in India. What operates as the genesis of scheme is the idea that the battle of Kurukshetra is never over. However, Kurukshetra is also the occasion for rehabilitating values, and upholding Dharma, which is always at stake, owing to myopic perception of the reality of the self and time. When the eternal reality of oneness and being ever-present is segregated into multiple manifestations of power, the conflict arises. The really powerful subsumes those realities, and becomes larger than the multiple selves: the self that means the object is identical with the larger self that possesses the object, just as when you seek the lost idea you are already in essence with the self that possesses the lost idea.

The question of sharing the kingdom of Hastinapur not only pitted the Pandavas and the Kauravas against each other but also led to the battle of Kurukshetra. Likewise, the question of sharing power in free India decided the course of history after 1947, and ultimately led to the clapping of the emergency. Once it was the values of Bhishma which were put paid to and on the other hand, those of Mahatma Gandhi in the recent past. The simple plot of values of collective experience being deserted for individual benefit of tasting the fruits of power and the consequent chaos informs the next of the Mahabharata as well as of The Great Indian Novel. Chaos is the conspicuous theme of The Great Indian Novel. The political history of modern India, bearing resemblance to the events and the characters of a bygone period underline the evolution of chaos as a result of the foibles and follies of the political personalities with responsibilities. They fail to live up to their expectation and equate that responsibility community wise, instead indulge in self aggrandizement. The upholders of Dharma in the two texts Bhishma and Gandhi fell sacrificial victims to their own progenies and protégés, for their inability to reconcile the imperatives of power. The vows of celibacy and loyalty to the throne of Hastinapur on the part of Bhishma and those of commitment to the path of truth and non violence for attaining and maintaining independence for India on the part of Mahatma Gandhi respectively turned out to be their traps of existence, virtually undoing all they had stood for. The self styled heirs to the throne of the kingdom and that of nation could not bring their respective vision and spirit to the seat of power, or otherwise they could not accommodate the multiplicity of their challenges to the administration of their constituency. The intellectual naivetes, and complacent self righteousness they exemplified wore down the fabric of equanimity and participation from the dispensation. The implication is to evolve an ideological instructional mode of moral being in both the worlds, the private and public, and to conquer the pitfalls of self aggrandizement, which Sashi Tharoor associates with the concept of dharma. In my view, to live in dharma is to live in harmony with one's purposes on earth, not necessarily in a traditional way. Dharma today must accompany doubt and diversity; it must accept that there is more than one truth, more than one Right, more than one Dharma.

All he wants the reader to share is to recognize the fact that we must have a common enemy to be together, which was in the British rule in a symbolic way, and now, more apparently in our own being. Quoting Theodor Herzl's view of nation as "a historical group of men of recognizable cohesion held together by common enemy", he holds that the common enemy upon to examine is the manifestation and syndromes of this eternal internal enemy, wrecking the socio cultural gains of the freedom movement in a free, democratic India and to make us participate in spiritual resurgence, identifying the enemy within ourselves.

When Ved Vyas sets the agenda of his memories before: his friend Brahma, saying "in my epic I shall tell of past, present and future, of existence and passing, of efflorescence and decay, of death and rebirth; of what is, of what was, of what should have been," he goes backwards into recesses of the time to probe the reasons or value structure of the modern Kurukshetra, the Emergency. It goes without saying that if the old Kurukshetra brought about the philosophy of 'Karna' delivered by lord Krishna, the modern versions of Kurukshetra requires all of us to discern and devise the ways and intents of righteousness as self effacingly as done by the Krishna of modern times, D.K Parthasarthi, a local MLA, and secretary of the Kaurava party/congress in the novel.

The narrative begins in the princely state of Hastinapur during the British raj amidst fears of annexation, lurking alters the death of Shantanu: when kings died without heirs in the days of the Raj, the consequences could be calamitous. Whereas in the past royal house could simply have adopted a male child to continue the family's hold on the throne, this was not quite as easy under the British, who had a tendency to declare the throne vacant and annex the territory for themselves.

The state of Hastinapur without an heir is typical of the state of Indian freedom movement under the congress divided into moderates and the extremists whom the British government did not recognize as the true representatives of the native people. But Ganga Dutta/Gandhi took charge of the affairs in the congress by installing Dhritarastra/Jawarlal Nehru as the heir apparent to the leadership of the congress and the nation. Acting regent like, Gandhi or the mythological Ganga Dutta supervised the direction of the freedom movement and transformed the congress into a radical force of change with his growing spiritual convictions, as the side confides to the British resident sir Richard:

He seems to believe in the moral authority, Sir ...Untouchability is no longer in Hastinapur,... But, of late, he has been known to say things about Swaraj ...And about pan-Indian nationalism.

Gandhi not only gave freedom movement a social objective by including more and more socially discarded people into the main stream of the national politics, but also nurtured the congress as the nursery of would be leaders. Extolling the virtues of Ganga Dutta, the self consciolls narrator, and the de facto father of the royal progenies, Ved Vyas says: it was getting more and more ascetic in his ways, he spared no extravagance in giving that: boys the best education, material comforts and personal opportunities. Each developed, in his own way, into an outstanding prospect, a princely as set to Hastinapur.

Conclusion: ‘The Great Indian Novel’, based on realistic approach focused on spiritual, political aspect of present, past and future of Indian myth relates the present political scenario of India. In almost all of his works we find glimpses of real India and real Indians one of the world’s most interesting countries its politics, its mentality and its cultural riches. The work of Sashi Tharoor concerned with the Indianans in Indian writing in English. Even after staying aboard for several years, for Sashi Tharoor, home remains where his heart is.

“As a citizen of the country, I have the right to express my view on issue that concern us, is the outcry of the author. To write fiction, he admits, “you time and space in your head because you have to create characters, which are as abides by this principle. He asserts that his works are nothing else but a realistic portrayal of life around us. Most of his literary creations are centered on Indian themes and they are markedly indo nostalgic.

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