



TESTIFYING THE POLITICAL FLUCTUATIONS IN THE GREAT INDIAN NOVEL AND INGLORIOUS EMPIRE

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Abstract:

Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* and *Inglorious Empire* show the politics in three phases of Indian subcontinent – Pre-Independence era, Independence era and Post-Independence era. The incidents in the novels allude the myth *The Mahabharatha* for Indian freedom struggle. The two wars Kurushektra and struggle for Independence are fought for the rights of ruling continent. The politics is differed in three eras and the mentality of the people has also undergone several changes and ups or downs. The political system or the ruling method during Pre-Independence era is Monarchy. A monarchy is a form of government in which a person, the monarch, is head of the state until his death. The politics prevailed during independence era is entirely by British. Their politics is known worldwide as Colonialism and Imperialism. Colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of people of the country by others. Like colonialism, imperialism also involves political and economic control over a dependent territory. And the politics after Independence is termed as Democracy.

Keywords: mentality, colonialism, imperialism, political, economic.

Political Fluctuations:

The politics during pre-independent lies only in the hands of Royal family. The same condition can be applied in the work. After the death of Shantanu, Bhishma, his son is the rightful heir to the throne. But the terrible vow of celibacy and his renunciation of the throne make the royal people to look for another option to rule the kingdom of Hastinapur. Dhirtarashtra is the rightful heir of the throne. Due to his disability of being blind, he has been expelled from his birthright.

The people of Hastinapur want a powerful and strong-minded king. So, the royal people consider the thought of people and the throne has been given to Pandu. The politics is the main stream of power. Power can be used in both ways -good and bad. Pandu is not an exponent in politics but he is brave enough to tackle the problems of the people. He runs the administration not only by himself by a council of ministers and directly solves the problem of people.

The king serves the people. The main role of king is to preserve dharma for those in his kingdom. The war Kurushektra has been purposely made or fought for preserving dharma. By performing his duty as protector and punisher, the king flourishes. The weak and helpless (i.e. widows, children, mentally ill, the destitute) are to receive royal protection. Beyond protecting his subjects against each other, the king, as a kshatriya, also has a duty to protect his subjects against external threats and wage war with rival

kingdoms. For instance, a king, when challenged, must never back down from a battle; indeed, fighting a battle for his people is his dharma. Duryodhana is the one who initiates war negotiating the peace contract put forward by Krishna.

When it comes to the organisation of his kingdom, a king, according to Manu, should place constables between every second, third, and fifth village, and at the hundredth village. Superintendents with jurisdiction over ten, twenty, a hundred, and a thousand villages should also be appointed. Any problems arising in villagers are to be reported to progressively higher superintendents; They understand the main politics strategy of a country. Villages are the starting point to serve and to the path of power.

Manu states that a king who is partial and unjust in his inflicting of punishment will himself will be punished. A king who follows proper procedure in hearing lawsuits is ensured frame in this world and heaven in the afterlife. They are ruled by heart and brain. They give equal chance and know where to apply the concept of ideas and systems. This gives a clear idea regarding the legal system.

Regarding the tax system, there is an understanding between the king and the people. The people will work in the land and give taxes to the king for protection. The bilateral contract implies that the people submitted to a sovereign authority that they created, they volunteered to pay the tax, the tax rate was fixed by the people. The taxes are paid to the king as a wage for protection and the king has to answer the people if he fails in his task.

There also have some limitations in taxation system. The king has limitations on how he can tax. The amount to be taxed is determined by the nature of the person. If they got rich by doing wrong, they are the ones to be highly taxed. Those who are prosperous are to be taxed little by little and those who cannot pay shall never be taxed. Only profits and surpluses shall be taxed. The king shall use the taxes to help and benefit the people. People admire a king with qualities mentioned above. People are the central characters and around them every system of politics shall be made to mention. Monarch is the system of ruling a country by a Monarch, but, it works for the development of people.

The next type of politics is entirely different from that of monarchy. The invasion of India by British. This session deals with the politics which are universally termed as “colonialism” Here, the views of the people have not been given any consideration. Invaders loot India for their country’s development. The English invaded India with the Introduction of East India company. In this era, the British introduces many kinds of policies such as Doctrine of Lapse and Divide and Rule. These are the strategies used by them to acquire power in Indian Subcontinent removing the captaincy of throne and crown. In the beginning of this era, the monarchy has been handed over the British and at the end of this era, India has splitted into two; one led by the Congress and the other by the Muslim League. Similarly, In The Great Indian Novel, the anti-imperialist movement is splitted into two in modern India, one led by the Congress and the other by Muslim League, but the Pandava-Kaurava identities are developed differently in this novel.

Kaurava clan looks for every opportunity to destroy Pandava clan as they have been popular among the subjects. It is:

Faraway, in a nondescript hotel room in charmless Varanavata, Kunti Devi Yadav, relict of the much-lamented Pandu, heard the news on a tinny radio and wept. She wept for the son she had never known, and for the fate that had deprived her of that knowledge. She wept, too, for lost innocence and acquired guilt: the innocence she had surrendered in the arms of Hyperion Helios, and the dreadful guilt that only a mother who has survived a child can know. A mother who, in this case, was obliged to mourn her son alone, and in silence. (GIN 95)

The policy called the Doctrine of Lapse is an annexation policy applied by the British East Indian Company in India until 1859. Many Indian states are annexed by Lord Dalhousie, the Governor-General of India to the English East India Company. Tharoor makes use of this policy of Doctrine of Lapse that any princely state that had no male heir was annexed by the British. The root of all the troubles in The Mahabharata lies in the inability of the kuru line to produce a royal heir to the throne. Tharoor utilises this part of the tale to show how important it is for India to produce worthwhile sons who can don the mantle of leadership when Independence is won.

The second strategy used by the British is “Divide and Rule”. The policy is seen as a mechanism used throughout history to maintain imperial rule. It identifies pre-existing ethno-religious divisions of the society and then manipulates them in order to prevent the subject peoples’ unified challenge to rule by outsiders. The British used this method to weaken the Indian powers by creating a gulf between the different communities in India. When the different groups of populace fight each other and weakened themselves they could easily be taken by the British.

Thousands of men are betrayed during World War I. Tharoor portrays the plightful situation thus:

The number of soldiers and support staff sent on overseas service from India during World War I was huge: among them 588,717 went to Mesopotamia, 116,159 to Egypt, 131,496 to France, 46,936 to East Africa, 4,428 to Gallipoli, 4,938 to Salonica, 20,243, to Aden and 29,457 to the Persian Gulf. Of these Indians, 29,762 were killed, 59,296 were wounded, 3,289 went missing, presumed dead, and 3,289 were taken prisoner. Of the total of 1,215,318 soldiers sent abroad there were 101,439 casualties. (GIN 75)

The next stage of politics in the discussion section is Post-Independence. 15th August 1947 marks the end of the colonial rule in India and the country finds itself standing on the threshold of a new era wherein the task is to build a strong nation. While India finds itself independent from the British, it is still hard to find independence from social, economic and political problems that has started to become a rock in the way of its growth. The problems that India faces right after independence are more than before.

Draupadi as symbol of democracy emerges from the sacrificial fire in *The Mahabharata* out of the turmoil of Imperialism and Nationalism, Democracy emerged. The parallels between the characters in the epic and in Indian history are surprisingly numerous. The *swayamvara* or the competition for the hand of Draupadi is linked to the elections and it is not a political party that wins, the people.

'If Miss D. Mokrasi had a fault,' he went on, knowing he was expected to be aware of one, 'it was terms that ought to have been more self-restrained. She did not always eat enough, that she spoke a little too readily, in a voice that for a young girl was somewhat too loud and in, and though she studied hard she often tended to learn by rote; but that completed the list of her disabilities. (GIN 72)

The *swayamvara* of Draupadi is described as a dream or vision. The line of suitors walks up to a large wooden box with a slit in the middle and drops slips of paper in it. Draupadi is made to sit inside it, and the lid clicks shut. The suitors have to try and open the box. “In the mists of my dream, Ganapathi, a long line of contenders walked forward to claim the hand of Draupadi. There were rich men, men of title, commoners and kings.” (GIN 313).

Post-Independence era talks about the political system of Democracy. Democracy is a system of government in which the citizens exercise power directly or elect representatives from among themselves to form a governing body, such as a parliament. It is also referred as “rule of the majority”. Here the power of ruling the government cannot be inherited. People elect their leaders.

Democratic system of government is a government by the people; a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system. Democracy explains that the power of the country resides in the hands of people. But, the question is how the people are abused when the power given to them is not rightly used like not casting their own votes, giving a chance to electoral ballot vote or absentee ballot vote and the selection of irresponsible leaders who do not pay any attention to the problems and necessities of the people when they come in power.

The term “Democracy” also implies a statement that the political power is not to be inherited. People are fooled that they are enjoying the facilities of a modern democratic system. But some parties such as The Congress party shows a line of constitutional monarchy or leadership over the country and party. The line starts from Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi and now Rahul Gandhi. The term “constitutional democracy” can be changed to constitutional monarchy” because it follows the family tradition of taking throne over generation after generation.

The next terrifying distress in democracy is terrorism. Tharoor in his work *Inglorious Empire* discusses the origination of terrorism. “The prolonged state of chronic hostility between India and Pakistan, punctuated by four bloody wars and the repeated infliction of cross-border terrorism as a Pakistani tactic against India, is the most obvious example.” (IE 245).

Every scheme introduced by the government is subjected to politics. Language, Agriculture, Education system, Natural resources is taken as the major subjects for the discussion of politics. Politicians who speak the greatness of Tamil language make their own children study English in private schools.

The major political parties in Tamilnadu are known for their corruption. But still people give their entire support to either of the two parties alternatively. It may seem to be the politics of power. Caste and religion play a remarkable role in choosing the candidate of the particular constituency. These two major parties fail in providing basic needs to all the people after the long seven decades of democracy. Politicians may not be blamed solely. The people of the nation have enough proof that they are being cheated by each politician but are forced to cast their votes again as they find no alternative. They believe that the next era of 5 years may cause a change in their lives after every election.

In recent years, government schools and government hospitals witness many improvements compared to the earlier years. Social media expose the quality of education in government schools. People believe that their children can have a better future by studying in private schools gaining additional skills and confidence with the fluency of English Language. The quality of education in government schools is up to the mark though the teachers are paid handsomely. The service in government hospitals also the same that the health department staffs are paid in lakhs. But they do not bother about the conditions of patients.

Media exposes the facts that government feeds the riches and ultimately the people remains poor. If someone questions the intention of the government he is branded to be an “anti-Indian”. Best medical and educational services may be obtained only in the private institutions. Though huge amount is allocated for equipping the government institutions they are not focussing in that aspect.

Even religion is made into subject of politics by some political parties. If politics is associated with religion it will not be in consonance with the provisions of the constitution. It will be very harmful if a political party favours one religion and uses it to get more votes. It may lead to conflict between different groups of people based on religious ideology.

According to Winston S. Churchill, a British politician, best decisions can be made out by “The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter”. The Prime Minister or Chief Minister or every politician in a post are given a period of 5 years. People should not be afraid of their government. Governments should be afraid of their people. People are responsible in constructing a better government.

References:

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