



ABSTRACT

Introduction:

Contemporary Indian writings in English have acquired a significant place of honour in the world increasingly identified as a global village. They have gained worldwide acknowledgment on account of the variety of texts, Indo-nostalgic themes and ideas. They have acquired their literary worth and their own individual prominence in the midst of the influx of variety of literatures emerging today. They have transcended the shorelines of the so-called commonwealth literature in the sense that they no longer endeavours to write back to the centre. They carry today, a kind of literary vibrancy and excellence in establishing their own tenor and texture. They have become mature enough to write about our own needs, successes, ambitions, aspirations and to reinvent and reclaim our rich past. They evaluate Indian society, culture and religion with vicious and kind frankness.

The present thesis seeks to provide a modest thematic study of the selected novels of Shashi Tharoor, the most popular Indian writer in English. It attempts to make comprehensive critical comments on his fiction with an emphasis on the concept of Indo-nostalgia, portrayed in his fiction. The study also aims at the exploration of the India-centered personality of Shashi Tharoor. Graduated from St. Stephen's College, in Delhi, Shashi Tharoor has been a multifarious person: a diplomat, politician, celebrity journalist, columnist, social commentator, an author and Indo-nostalgic writer. Most of his books are the best seller as he realistically projects the true image of India in contemporary terms. He has an extraordinary ability to discuss the very sensitive aspects of human relationships in general and Indo-nostalgia in particular. He believes in a very frank narration of incidents from India and openheartedness to reality testing. Nothing is reserved in his fiction. It is in this respect, Shashi Tharoor differs from other Indian writers in English. Since, the present research seeks to explore and explicate overall image of India, appeared in his novels, selected for the study, It is a fascinating one from an Indian point of view. As the present study is not restricted only to his novels but it also explores his Indian point of view. Moreover, it is, to showcase his Indo-nostalgia based on particular Indian themes through thematic analysis.

Purpose and Plan of Research:

In spite of the substantial contribution of Shashi Tharoor to Indian novels in English, his novels have not been fully explored. Yet, no elaborate work is carried out on his fiction so far. In terms of research, he has remained completely neglected. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to fill the lacuna and also to highlight Indo-nostalgia, the untouched concept of literary exploration and to show how he differs from the other Indian novelists in English. The following novels of Shashi Tharoor are thematically analysed in the thesis.

1. *The Great Indian Novel* (1989)
2. *Show Business: A Novel* (1991)
3. *Riot: A Novel* (2001)

The chapter scheme is as follows:

Chapter one: Nostalgia and Indo-nostalgia: A Theory and Concept

Chapter two: Shashi Tharoor: A Man and Artist

Chapter three: *The Great Indian Novel*

Chapter four: *Riot: A Novel*

Chapter five: *Show Business: A Novel*.

Chapter six: Conclusion

Bibliography

In the introductory chapter one, entitled 'Nostalgia and Indo-nostalgia: A Theory and Concept' an attempt has been made to differentiate and correlate the key concepts of the research. Basically, nostalgia is a medical condition stressing emphasis on lost human relations, incidents and emotions. However, Indo-nostalgia is a typical type of literary longing for Indian culture, epics, and major incidents which a corpus of Indian authors uses to portray the image of India through their fiction. Here, a novel concept of Indo-nostalgia is defined and elaborated, by taking illustrations from Indian writings in English. In terms of literature, it is a type of fictional operation which a writer uses to project his yearning of India of yesteryears. Moreover, it can also be used as a critical method to assess the entire corpus of Indian writings in English.

From the historical perspective, Indian English literature has passed through several phases such as Indo-Anglican, Indo-English, Indian Writing in

English and recently Indian English Literature. Nowadays, the process of canonisation of Indian English literature is completed and there is a bright prospect to fit it in the days of globalisation and there is a new emerging trend, viz. Indo-nostalgic writing, to explore India with all its multi-verse cultural, political, topographical, linguistic and regional disparity. The intellectuals in India before independence concentrated on the national awakening and the society in a realistic manner. It was a challenge for them to express distinctly a haunting Indian consciousness in an Indo-nostalgic endeavour. So, the trend has emerged in the present world of mobile sensibility to remember, meditate and recast India in fictional terms.

The chapter two 'Shashi Tharoor: A Man and Artist' deals with the biographical details of the author. It also details his multi-verse career as a writer, diplomat and politician. The chapter details from his childhood to his present position. It also focuses on his major works including fiction, non-fiction and the articles; that he writes consistently on his website. Moreover, the author's views on Hinduism and secularism are handled at length to offer better foregrounding to his thematic concerns. The chapter mirrors the author as a literary artist rather than a diplomat though both the sides of his personality are discussed and handled at length.

The chapter three *The Great Indian Novel* examines the fiction in the light of Indo-nostalgic thematic concerns. It elaborates how Tharoor captures the essence of Indo-nostalgia by comparing the *Mahabharata* and *The Great Indian Novel*. The author himself is absolutely indebted to the epic for providing him the plot to the novel. After all, it is a satirical novel on the twentieth century India in which the author has cast the lights of Indian ancient legends upon not only the events of the more recent part but also on a contemporary nineteen-ninety's sensibility teaching the lessons we have taken for granted from our history and mythology. Moreover, he has taken the more contemporary facts of our national struggle and put them in the typical sensibility to retell the story of the *Mahabharata*. However, the chapter also sheds significant light on his masterly use of literary devices such as pun, parody, allusion, irony etc. to evoke the sense of Indo-nostalgia in the minds of the readers. Moreover, the author's creative use

of history is also critically analysed and discussed at length which offers the fiction a touch of Indo-nostalgia. The chapter discusses how Tharoor uses historical myths and legends such as Nehru, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Mahatma Gandhi, Subhash Chandra Bose and so on, to recast and reclaim his Indo-nostalgic concern.

Lexically speaking, 'Riot' is a communal conflict whether harsh or worse. The chapter four *Riot: A Novel* evaluates and examines the central theme of the novel, that is, communal tensions with reference to the situations and the characters portrayed to suggest Indo-nostalgia against the love for the land of India. The fanaticism gives rise to communal pressure which results in the form of riots. However, it is a love story of Lakshman, an Indian and Priscilla, an American doctorate and social volunteer; who is too much Indo-nostalgic. Her love for Lakshman and India makes her consciously mad. Creating a podium of love between a married Lakshman and Priscilla, Tharoor satirises the Indian marital system. Through Gurinder Singh, Tharoor satirises the policies of Indian politics. The author calls Indian elections as a popular *tamasha* to attract voters. In his opinion, officials in India are mere puppets at the hands of the Indian politicians. He reveals how power is made corrupted by means of the institution of Indian bureaucracy. On the other hand, through Ram Charan Gupta, a multi-verse *dharma*-centeredness of Indian people is satirised. He is a Hindu chauvinist; who always embarks upon the superiority of the Hindus over the Muslims. His comments in the novel against the Muslims hold a mirror to his intense and religious blind-belief. Moreover, Katherine is an influential non-Indian character, who condemns Indian traditions and a foul marriage system which makes a woman an angel in the house without giving her enough liberty on financial and emotional grounds. She condemns the Indian predicament of women tolerating patriarchal pressures and blind surrender to their husbands with their bodies and souls. However, through Professor Sarwar, a Muslim believer in India's diversity, Tharoor paints the picture of Muslims' patriotic ideology which portrays Indian spirit. Thus, the chapter thematically analyses the multi-versed aspects of India dealt with by the author. The chapter establishes the author as a conscious writer who is intensely interested in Indian experimentation and condition.

The chapter five *Show Business: A Novel* examines and analyses the text, centered on the Bollywood. In view of the author, Bollywood is excellent at telling stories all over the world about Indian condition. Tharoor has taken Bollywood as a special phenomenon to explore an Indian condition. The novel is written in 'Takes.' These 'Takes' are nothing but stories centered on Indian predicament of men and women. The author confesses his Indo-nostalgic yearning while writing these stories for *Show Business*. However, the novel is a story of an actor Ashok Banjara, recast to remind Bollywood superstar, Amitabh Bachchan. His life helps Tharoor to peep into Indian predicament of Bollywood stars and to explore rich cultural ethos of India. Other characters like Maya, Abha, Mehnaz Elahi, Ashwin and Pranay assist Tharoor to explore the duties and responsibilities of an individual to fulfil one's physical, political, moral duties and carnal desires in a typical Indian standard and condition.

The concluding chapter summarises the discourse and is a final assertion and assessment of Tharoor's literary art. It examines, in brief, his Indo-nostalgic fictional operation to arrive at India and to express his intense love for her, his mother land. It also revises the fundamental themes centered on Indo-nostalgia. The chapter establishes with all its thematic underpinnings, Indo-nostalgia as a touchstone method to assess not only Tharoorian literary art but also the entire corpus of Indian writings in English. Finally, though he is criticised for some controversial political comments, Shashi Tharoor definitely writes with a purpose. One cannot ignore him because he is the celebrity writer and has contributed in his own distinct way to Indian novels in English. In the present scenario of mobile sensibility and constant displacement, a study of his novels facilitates to widen and direct our thoughts to pertinent problems affecting true Indian sensibility and identity.