Chapter I : Introduction

SHASHI THAROOR'S LIFE AND WORKS

SHASHI THAROOR AS A POWERFUL
Chapter I : Introduction

SHASHI THAROOR'S LIFE AND WORKS

SHASHI THAROOR AS A POWERFUL WRITER

In his interview with Diva International, Shashi Tharoor said:

“I consider myself an Indian writer. All my books are about India. That’s partially because unlike other expatriates, I have not emigrated anywhere. I’m in New York because my UN job obliges me to be here. In our jobs we carry our identity and national background with us. So I’m an Indian writer who happens to live in New York. In my writing, I have focused very much on the things that matter to me about India, in both fiction and non-fiction. I will say though, that a writer really lives in his head and on the page; geography is merely a circumstance. You can certainly look beyond your geography as a writer, and just as people can sit in America and write about the Caribbean (or vice-versa), so why cannot I, as an Indian sit here to write about India?”(An Interview)

This affirmation of Shashi Tharoor is the central theme of his creative world and on the axis of his conceptual vision and art, all the characters of his novels revolve. Tharoor has added a new dimension to the Indo-English fiction, and non-fiction after 1960. His novels have added new hope those like of other contemporary Indian writers like Anita Desai, Arun Joshi, Nayantara Sehgal, Ruth Prawar Jhabwala, Khushwant Singh and Manohar Malgonkar whose works contain seeds of future development. Shashi Tharoor is the award winning author of eleven books, as well as hundreds of articles and book reviews in a wide range of publication, both in India and overseas. His literary works includes four Fiction, *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), *The Five Dollar Smile and Other Stories* (1990), *Show Business* (1992), *Riot* (2001). His seven non-fiction consist of *Reasons of State* (1982), *India: From Midnight to the

Shashi Tharoor appeared on the Indian Literary horizon in 1982 with the publication of his novel Reasons of State. The novel received wide acclaim from the readers and critics. It is considered as a trend-setting novel as it deals with the political situation which naturally demands a writer’s involvement with the political if not politics. Politics and society never remain separate and they have now become staple in the content of Indian novels which is well explained in all his novel. His three works are the classic, The Great Indian Novel (1989), which is required reading in several courses on Post-colonial Literature. Riot (2001) a searing examination of Hindu-Muslim violence in contemporary India, and Show Business Bollywood (1992) which received a front page accolade in the New York Times book Review and has since been made into a motion picture Bollywood. His books have been translated into French, German, Italian, Polish, Romanian, Spanish, Malayalam and Marathi. The novel The Great Indian Novel is a satirical novel by Shashi Tharoor. It is a fictional work that takes the story of the Mahabharata, the epic of Hindu mythology, and recasts and resets it in the context of the Indian Independence Movement and the first three decades of post-independence. Figures from Indian history are transformed into characters from mythology, and the mythical story of India is retold as a history of Indian independence and subsequent history, up through the nineteen eighties. The work includes numerous puns and allusions to famous works about India, such as those by Rudyard Kipling, Paul Scott and E. M. Forster. Since then he has published Riot nonetheless, taking history as its base, Tharoor revisits the past with objectivity and irony, and
transforms it into historiographical meta-fiction which problematizes history by presenting historical incidents and characters. The novel is based on the actual incident related to a riot that took place in Khargone, Madhya Pradesh. The fictional account of the riot, the actual incidents relating to the Coca-Cola controversy in India and the conflicts of Ram JanamBhoomi/Babri Masjid indicate the understanding that treats history as fiction. Written by an Indian national, it has the resonance of that culture, which is unique.

The novel The Show Business is all about Bollywood and a young film-star, Ashok, who seems to happily stumble into just about everything in his life. He goes to Bollywood, and becomes a star, and eventually also has a political career. The book combines styles, including film play form. The next book of Tharoor is The Five Dollar Smile is all about touching and a funny collection of stories which showcases Tharoor’s daunting literary acumen, as well as the keen sensitivity informs his ability to write profoundly and entertainingly on themes ranging from family conflict to death. It is the title story written in a lonely hotel room in Geneva soon after the author began his work with the United Nations. A young Indian orphan is on his way to visit America for the first time and his anguish and longing in the airplane seem hardly different from those of any American child. Tharoor’s admiration for P. G. Wodehouse makes How Bobby Chatterjee turned to Drink a delightful homage, while The Temple Thief, The Simple Man and The Political Murder bring to mind of O. Henry and Maupassant. His three college stories, Friends, The Pyre and The Professor’s Daughter, are full of youthful high jinx, naive, infatuations and ingenious wordplay. The Solitude of the Short-Story Writer is a smart, self-aware, Woody Allen-ensue exploration of a writer’s conflicted relationship with his psychiatrist.

Author, Peace-keeper, refugee worker, human rights activist and now is the Indian Minister of State for External Affairs and a member of the Indian parliament from the
Thiruvananthapuram constituency in Kerala, Shashi Tharoor thus straddles several world of experience. He is also an internationally known speaker on India’s recent transformation and future prospects which includes globalization freedom of the press, human rights, literacy, Indian culture and India’s present potential.

The influence of Tharoor in world politics is excellent. He is a well-known effective speaker, very fluent in English and French. Dr. Tharoor a member of the Tharoor Tharavadu of Malyali Heritage, was born on 9th March 1956 in London, in United Kingdom to Lily and Chandran Tharoor. He was educated in India and the United States, completing his Ph.D. in 1978 at the Fletcher school of Law, he was also awarded an honorary D.Litt. by the University of Puget Sound.

Shashi Tharoor's career in the United Nations began in 1978 as a staff member of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva. From 1981 to 1984 he headed the UNHCR office in Singapore during the boat people crisis. In 1989 he was appointed as the Special Assistant to the Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, the unit that later became the Peacekeeping Operations in New York. Until 1996, he led the team responsible for peacekeeping operations in the former Yugoslavia. In 1996 Tharoor was appointed Director of Communications for Special Projects and as Executive Assistant to the Secretary-General Kofi Annan. In January 2001, he was appointed as the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, and as the head of Department of Public Information (UNDPI). In his capacity, he was responsible for the communication strategy, enhancing the image and effectiveness of the UN. In 2003, the Secretary-General appointed him to the additional responsibility of United Nations Coordinator for Multilingualism.

During his tenure at the UNDPI, Tharoor reformed his department and undertook a number of initiatives, ranging from organizing and conducting the first-ever UN seminar on
Anti-Semitism, the first-ever UN seminar on Islam phobia, and launching an annual list of ‘Ten Under-Reported Stories the World Ought to Know About’. On 9 February 2007, Tharoor resigned from the post of UN Under-Secretary-General and left the UN effective from 1 April 2007. Shashi Tharoor gives four-point plan to reform UN 2007 Secretary-General Candidates name Ban Ki Moon, the South Korean foreign minister. Shashi Tharoor Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations for public information to the Nations, had withdrew his candidacy. In 2006, Tharoor was nominated by the Government of India for the post of UN Secretary General. Tharoor came a close second (behind Ban Ki Moon) in each of the four straw polls conducted by the UN Security Council and won the online poll conducted by the BBC News website. After the fourth poll, Ban emerged as the only candidate with the support of all five permanent members, each of whom has the power to veto candidates. Of the seven contenders for the post, Tharoor remained the only other to enjoy a majority in the Security Council. One Permanent Member (later revealed to be the US under the Bush Administration) opposed and China abstained from voting. After the vote, Tharoor withdrew his candidacy expressing his confidence for Ban to win. Had he been elected, the 57 year old Shashi Tharoor would have been the second-youngest Secretary-General to be appointed to the post, the first being Dag Hammarskjold who was appointed at the age of 46 years. Post-UN career in February 2007, amidst rampant speculation about his post-UN future, it was reported in the Indian press that Tharoor might be inducted into council of ministers of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as Minister of State for External Affairs. In the same month, it was reported in an American gossip blog that Tharoor was a finalist for the position of dean of the USC Annenberg School for Communication in Los-Angeles, though he withdrew his name from consideration at the final stage.

Tharoor, in addition to a variety of other activities in his private life, became chairman of Dubai-based Afras Ventures, which established the Afras Academy for Business
Communication (AABC) in Trivandrum, Kerala, India. He also spoke widely around the globe about India and Kerala, the state where he spent increasing amounts of time before moving for good in October 2008. Since 2012, he is a member of the Advisory Council of The Hague Institute for Global Justice. In March 2009, Shashi Tharoor contested the Indian General Elections as Congress Party candidate from Thiruvananthapuram (Lok Sabha constituency) in Kerala. His opponents included P. Ramachandran Nair of the Communist Party of India (CPI), Neelalohitadasan Nadar of the BahujanSamaj Party (BSP), M.P. Gangadharan of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and P. K. Krishna Das of Bharathiya Janata Party (BJP). Despite being criticized as an "elite outsider" he went on to win defeating his nearest CPI rival P. Ramachandran Nair by a margin of approximately 100,000 votes. Subsequently Tharoor was selected as Minister of State in the Council of Ministers of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

On 28 May 2009, he was sworn in as the Indian Minister of State for External Affairs. Tharoor became the first Indian celebrity to get 10,000 followers on Twitter. On 18 April 2010, Tharoor resigned from his post as Minister of State for External Affairs on instructions from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, following allegations that he had misused his office to get shares in the IPL cricket franchise of Cochin. Tharoor denied the charges and in his resignation speech called for a full inquiry. On 2 May 2010, he was nominated to be a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee for External Affairs by Lok Sabha Speaker Mira Kumar. Later he became Minister of State for Human Resource and Development after a Cabinet reshuffle in 2012.

A theatre buff and successful actor in his school days, Tharoor played Antony to Mira Nair’s Cleopatra in a 1974 production of Antony and Cleopatra. At St. Stephen’s college in the early 1970s he founded the Quiz Club, which is still in existence; he also revived the Wodehouse Society, which is no longer in existence. Upon election as President of the College
Union he relinquished the Secretaryship of the History Society as well as the editorship of the campus humor magazine *Kooler Talk*. He was invited by St. Stephen’s College to deliver the college’s 125th Anniversary Jubilee Lecture in 2005. He has been an elected Fellow of the New York Institute for the Humanities and a member of the Advisory Board of the Indo-American Arts Council and also served on the Board of Directors of Breakthrough, an international human rights organization, the Board of Overseers of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, the Board of Trustees of the Aspen Institute, and as an International Advisor to the International Committee of the Red Cross. He also supported various educational causes, including as Patron of the Modern High School in Dubai. At the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1976, he founded and was the first chair of the editorial board of the Fletcher Forum of International Affairs, a journal examining issues in international relations.

Tharoor's first wife was Tilottama Mukherjee, an academic from Kolkata. Later he was married to Christa, a Canadian working at the United Nations. After their divorce, Tharoor married Sunanda Pushkar, an Indian Businesswoman at his ancestral home in Elavanchery village in Kerala's Palakkad district on 22 August 2010. He has two sons Ishaan and Kanishk who are now 17 and are living in New York with Tharoor’s Journalist wife Tillotama, from whom he is separated.

Dr. Tharoor is a Minister of State for Human Resource and Development, Govt. of India. He has been in the news for a while for his alleged involvement in IPL Kochi Team. Presently he is a Member of Parliament and Minister of State. Selected to Lok Sabha for first time in 2009 election and served as Union Minister of State External Affairs till 2010. He is a columnist, writer and analyst in several Indian and International publication. A running theme of Tharoor's is the state of the *Four Pillars* of the Nehruvian legacy. His verdict on the foursome is that democracy endures, secularism is besieged, non-alignment is all but forgotten
and socialism barely clings on. Tharoor says that he "started writing the book as divided between admiration and criticism as when I finished it; but the more I delved into Nehru's life, it is the admiration which deepened." (Literary Review, Dec 7, 2003) Nothing more can be said except that some years ago, the Chinese gave Mao Zedong 70 marks out of 100. Only the other day The Economist wrote, in a different context, that Nehru's standing in India, 40 years after his death, is higher than Mao's in China.

Tharoor as a fluid and powerful writer has written numerous articles short stories and commentaries in Indian and western publications. His *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) is the best example of post-colonial writing. Tharoor has appropriated his master’s voice to narrate stories around that peculiar moment in history when India and England parted ways politically but could not completely cutoff all linguistic, mythical, personal bonding. He is also interesting, because of his separate backgrounds. He in his writings use India, its history, its legends, its language. He in *The Great Indian Novel* merges the legends and legendary figures of the Mahabharata with historical and literary figures for much the same purpose. He goes beyond anger as each develops in exuberant, humorous, even critical manner their respective narratives.

Tharoor refuses to be awed by the language in which he write even when it is, as Tharoor’s narrator suggests, the only language Indians might have in common with other Indians, the only language in which a writer can write and even when it is distorted. The crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing define itself by seizing the language of the Centre and replacing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place. Post-colonial critics note that one of the common themes of different literatures in English is the theme of celebration of the struggle towards independence. The partition of the sub-continent thus is an event that almost every writer in English has focused on in at least one novel like this. Even Tharoor uses the language of the Centre to describe the moment in history when that Centre is forced to relinquish its hold on the empire. However a great difference
between writers like Khushwant Singh in *Train to Pakistan*, Manohar Malgonkar in *A Bend in the Ganges*, Chaman Nahal in *Azadi*, Rushdie in *Midnight’s Children*, and Tharoor is the manner in which they use this historical fact. He uses the legends of the Mahabharata, to describe this historical moment, so that Drona, Yudishtra, Draupadi, Karna once more participate in the cataclysm that affects the entire land, turning in to Kurukshetra. He uses English to portray a moment in history when the English would leave, his use of English shows a blend of his colonial past and his own heritage. The hybridity that is the mark of the post-colonial. As Tharoor’s narrator notes, the post-colonial is familiar with both cultures sometimes leading to absurdity:

‘Didn’t think I knew much about cricket did you? As I told you, Ganpathi, I know a great deal like India herself, I am at home in novels and space, I read the Vedas and quote the laws of cricket, I move, my large young man to the strains of a morning raga in perfect evening dress.’ (LR-Dec 07, 2003)

It is this richness of heritage that marks the post-colonial writer inspiring someone like Tharoor to blend the strands that go in to the making of his complex culture:

Considering the long intercourse with India, it is noteworthy that the additions which have thus accrued to the English language are, from the intellectual standpoint, of no intrinsic value. Nearly all the borrowed words refer to material facts, or to peculiar customs and stages of society, and, though a few of them furnish allusions to the penny-a-liner, they do not represent new ideas. (Hobson *Jobson* xxi).

Made by A. C. Burnell, a colonial administrator in British India, this observation aptly describes the attitude of the British administration to the influence of Indian languages on English. This statement appears in the introduction to *Hobson Jobson*, a now infamous lexicon of the particular and peculiar words used by the English in India described by Salman Rushdie
as "three thousand odd pages [which] bear eloquent testimonial to the unparalleled intermingling that took place between English and the languages of India" (Imaginary Homelands 81) is of crucial import. The act of cataloguing all of India's contributions in an all-encompassing, master narrativesque dictionary such as Hobson Jobson is itself a colonizing act that seeks to contain while repudiating the contributions to English by the Indian languages. As Tejaswini Niranjna suggests in her introductory chapter of Siting Translation, the act of classification is itself a form of discursive domination for it implicitly suggests that the master dis-courses of the colonizers can effect a complete understanding of the colonized subject.

Clearly, Burnell’s dismissive statement relates to the notion that although the British can 'borrow' words from India (note that India is given no agency here), India itself has no substantive contribution to make to the English language. This chapter will examine the validity of such a viewpoint by closely examining the construction of hybridized language in which English is layered over other regional Indian languages. Through this chapter it is discussed how Tharoor is known as a powerful writer form of discursive resistance in texts by the Indian author like him.

Before proceeding with an analysis of Tharoor’s powerful writings of particular texts, it is worth contextualizing the ensuing discussion in relation to the language debate between postcolonial writers such as and Chinua Achebe, for whom questions relating to the role of English are absolutely crucial. In Decolonizing the Mind, an African writer Ngugi poses the question:

“We as African writers have always complained about the neo-colonial economic and political relationship to Euro-America. Right But by continuing to write in foreign languages, paying homage to them, are we not on the cultural level continuing that neo-colonial slavish and cringing spirit? What is the difference between a politician who says Africa cannot do without imperialism
and the writer who says Africa cannot do without European languages?” (IDTM-26)

Clearly, Ngugi argues against the use of English, French and Portuguese by African writers. Embedded in his argument is the notion that these languages are (or should be) binarily opposed to the African experience because they serve to prolong a European domination. In suggesting that the use of English perpetuates a cultural hegemony over Africa, Ngugi implies that European languages are the linguistic, literary and intellectual property of the colonizers. Presenting a counter argument, Chinua Achebe argues that the colonized subject not only has a claim over English, but should shape it for a particular use. Nothing that he has been given a language (English) which he intends to use, Achebe argues:

Those of us who inherited the English language may not be in a position to appreciate the value of the inheritance. Or we may go on resenting it because it came as part of a package deal which included many other items of doubtful value and the positive atrocity of racial arrogance and prejudice which may yet set the world on fire. But let us not in rejecting the evil throw out the good with it. (Transition screen-9-10 of 21)

Achebe thus sees himself in the paradigmatic Caliban-esque situation, claiming an ownership over English whereby he can use the master's tool to dismantle the master's house. Seizing the colonizer’s language is emancipatory in the sense that it is possible to use the language intended to subject him to a cultural hegemony to subvert the hegemony itself.

This, in a very rudimentary fashion serves to summarize the ongoing debate, but nonetheless important for the discussion in this chapter precisely because it provides a framework in which to situate Indian-English writers such as Shashi Tharoor. Like Achebe, Tharoor writes in English partly because it becomes a possible tool of resistance. Alastair Pennycook, in a discussion of the use of English in post-colonial settings notes:
When we start to investigate the uses of English in colonial and post-colonial societies, then, it becomes important to acknowledge its importance not only as the language of imperialism but also as one of the key languages of resistance. English and the European languages were indeed the languages of the oppressors, the languages of cultural penetration and the languages of political and economic manipulation, threatening local languages, cultures and knowledge, and changing forever certain ways of life. But they were also the languages of political opposition and of founding new ways of enunciating the struggle for independence. (The cultural Politics of English as an International Language-262)

The idea that English and the European languages have become languages of resistance for the colonized subject is one that affects Tharoor's project. In his texts, Tharoor uses English, a lingua franca of India as a part of his attempt to explore the possibilities of reversing the traditional hegemony of language. As Pennycook asserts:

The key question is, under what conditions are there possibilities of making alternative readings, readings that go against the grain of the cultural and discursive frames in which language is lodged? This is, of course, a question of cultural politics, a question of how we can struggle to create alternatives in the face of the linguistic, cultural and discursive limitations on those possibilities.(The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language - 263).

This is a particularly important question to be asking in that it alerts to the fact that the 'colonizer's' language can be used to liberate the 'colonized' subject. This emancipatory quality of language relates to an important question with regard to Shashi Tharoor's project of creating alternatives in the face of the limitations that Pennycook describes. In his novel, he overtly 'responds' to this question. The second chapter of *The Great Indian-Novel*, titled *The Duel with
the Crown specifically finds alternative discursive possibilities within the language of the Centre. On the most apparent level of the title, it is obvious that Tharoor is using language to subvert the cultural hegemony of the British use of English. The title of the novel is an intra-lingual translation of the Indian epic Mahabharata. Maha signifying 'great' in Sanskrit and 'Bharat' signifying India, is translated by Tharoor's, The Great Indian Novel. In addition, the title of the chapter is an intra-lingual translation of "The Jewel in the Crown", used by the British Empire in reference to India, and also the title of one of the volumes of Scott's Raj Quart. By appropriating this phrase, and adapting it for his purposes, Tharoor creates a new semantic signifier that casts the colonized relationship in a markedly different light.

The British phrase attributes a positive, but essentially passive role to India. India, in this context, is given no agency. As she is positioned as a beautiful but ultimately ornamental object. As a jewel, she is but one component of the crown that occupies a peripheral role in relation to the Centre, Britain. Tharoor's translation on the other hand attributes a more active role to India. The country, in this context, has the agency to take on an antagonistic role by becoming engaged in a battle with the colonizer. The use of the word 'with' is important because it eliminates nuances of Centre and periphery. Clearly, Tharoor's alteration suggests that Britain and India can be positioned at the same level. This act of translation becomes a subtle form of discursive resistance because the translated phrase suggests that it is possible to resist the passive role attributed to India by the British crown by altering the way India's peripheral positionality has been constructed through the signifier of the jewel in the crown.

Moreover, it is important that Tharoor uses 'English' to subvert 'English' because he is finding the strength to overcome the hegemony within the language itself. In The Empire writes Back, Ashcroft et al. posit that a hallmark of post-colonial writing is appropriation, "the process by which the language [of the Centre] is taken and made to 'bear the burden' of one's own cultural experience" (38). Tharoor's appropriation of the British symbolic signifier thus is a
form of appropriation that bears directly on what he perceives to be the experience of the colonized. The concept of appropriation in this context can be perhaps be better understood as a form of intra-lingual translation because Tharoor's new signifier is a reworking of the phrase *Jewel in the Crown* by means of signs already available in standardized versions of the English language. His translation thus signifies an attempt to revise the terms of colonialist discourse. Rather than emphasizing Britain's literal and figurative moves to inscribe India into empire, Tharoor foregrounds the tension of the Indian attempt to actively resist this 'imperialist hegemony' by using a phrase that evokes the idea that India can be constructed in non-passive, non-decorative terms.

Tharoor's translation works against the idea of the *Jewel in the Crown*, also works with it. The success of his new intra-lingual translation relies heavily on the reader's ability to recognize that *Duel with the Crown* derives from the *Jewel in the Crown*. Chantal Zebus notes, "in order to come to terms with the ‘otherness’ of such a language as English [in relation to post-colonial languages,] she will be using the governing metaphor of the palimpsest" (268). She describes a palimpsest "as a writing material, on which an original writing has been effaced to make room for a second" (268) thus defining language as a subtly layered entity that accounts for the presence of English and the particular languages of the colonized subject. This is an appropriate metaphor for Tharoor's title ‘*The Duel with the Crown*' because in the process of comprehending the revisionist goal embedded in this phrase, the reader will be forced to delve beyond the surface-level of Tharoor's signifier. To use Zabus' metaphor, this phrase has to be dissected to understand its antecedent. Then only the meaning of Tharoor's signifier come into full bloom. Hence, a certain dialogue is established between the two phrases precisely because the latter signifier is a translation of the former.

In reworking British colonialist language, Tharoor also relies on the linguistic and literary legacy of the colonizer to create a language that has direct recourse to its Indian setting.
The chapter titled, *The Duel in the Crown* focuses on a conversation between two members of the British regime in India, Sir Richard and Heaslop. The choice of names is important particularly because Heaslop is a name of a central character (the city magistrate in Chandrapore) in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. However this is not simply a fortuitous connection, rather it is a deliberate attempt to evoke Forster's novel. To return to the palimpsest, Tharoor's Heaslop is layered over Forster's Heaslop. The character, Heaslop in Tharoor's novel functions as a quasi-intra-lingual translation. To fully appreciate Tharoor moves to marginalize the role of the British administrator in his novel in which one has to be aware that Heaslop is a central character in *A Passage to India*. The novel *The Great Indian Novel* is still a notable example of a post-colonial writer's attempt to break free of the restraints of a metropolitan culture. His revision History provides a 'site of intersection' where the post-colonial writer can refigure dominant European narratives. *The Great Indian Novel* thus emerges at this juncture. Yet in an interesting twist, Tharoor's appropriation of 'Heaslop' becomes a way to seize the colonial literary legacy and re-formulate it for an Indian context. While one still needs to access Heaslop through Forster, Tharoor creates a niche in his novel for this character such that Heaslop is created a new by the 'colonized' subject. He is translated into a new literary context in which he cease to be a dominant player. In fact this character, as I will later discuss, is marginalised to the extent that his voice cannot be heard by the person who 'needs' to listen to him. The act of renaming, or transferring this name to Tharoor's novel works to reverse the hegemony of language, just as the British used the power of naming to exercise their domination over the colonies, the colonized writer (in this case, Tharoor) can 'free' him or herself by infusing new meaning into the name. Heaslop no longer has exclusive recourse to Forster. Tharoor can also claim a literary paternity to this name. An important dimension of his project is thus to illustrate that as a writer emerging from a formerly colonized space. Tharoor cannot use the language of the metro pole, but he can infuse new meaning into it. It thus
becomes doubly significant when Tharoor use English to create a fictional situation in which the colonizer is unable to understand language in the colonial space. This chapter focuses on a conversation between Sir Richard and an Indian in which Sir Richard is frustrated by the 'native's inability to comprehend him. Having recently acquired a basic vocabulary in Hindi or Urdu, Sir Richard feels confident enough to use the 'language'. In asking for a drink he says, “Right.” Two whiskies, do whisky, boy and a big jug of water, understand. Not a little lota, eh? Bring it in a “Misti Bhisti men Lao” (37). Prior to this, Sir Richard and Heaslop have been engaged in a conversation discussing the language (Hindi or Urdu). Perhaps it is worth looking at this conversation in some detail:

'Jamadar, Sir Richard,' the aide, a thin young man with a while pinched face, said, coughing politely. 'A bitsy is only a water carrier'

'Really? Thought those were called Lotas.'

'They are sir... Lotas are these little pots you carry water in, I mean they carry water in. Sir Richard, whereas.' (TGIN-36)

'A Bhisti is the kind they have to balance on their heads, I suppose... Damn complicated language this Hindustani. Different words for everything'

'Yes, sir ... I mean, no sir,' began the equerry [Heaslop] unhappy about his own choice of words. He wanted to explain that a Bhisti was a person, not a container. (TGIN-36)

Placing Sir Richard's order for water in a Bhisti in this context adds a dimension of humor to the text because Sir Richard has requested water to be brought by a person that is a water-carrier, thinking that a Bhisti is a large earthen pot. This confusion arises because he is not interested in listening to Heaslop’s translation. Even though to translate ‘water carrier’ as ‘Bhisti’ is not incorrect, it is incorrect in this particular context. Ironically, Sir Richard is cast in a comical light because he thinks he has mastered the language. Tharoor writes:
‘Nothing to it really,’ Sir Richard continued. ‘These native languages don't really have much to them, you know. And it's not as if you have to write poetry in them.’ A few crucial words, sufficient English for ballast, and you're sailing smoothly. In fact, this voice became confidential, 'I even have a couple of tricks up my sleeve' He leaned towards the young man. His eyes, mouth and face all round in concentration. 'There was a banned crow,' he intoned sonorously, 'There was a cold day.' Not bad, eh? I learned those on the boat. Sound like perfect Urdu. I'm told,' He paused and frowned. The devil of it is remembering which means, "close the door," and which one will get someone to open it. Well never mind,' he said, as his companion opened his mouth in diffident helplessness. 'We're not here for a language lesson’ (TGIN-37).

This passage, to the reader who understands Hindi, merely brings Sir Richard's apparent foolishness to light. Not because Richard cannot speak the language, but because he arrogantly assumes that he can due to its 'lack' of complexity. Moreover, he conflates Hindi and Urdu as if to suggest that they are mutually interchangeable. Thus, when we are told that the water, after considerable delay is indeed brought in a Bhisti.

The bearer clapped his hands. A grimy figure in a dirty undershirt and dirtier loincloth entered the verandah, carrying a black oilskin bag from one end of which water dripped relentlessly on to the tiled floor. 'Bhisti. Sahib,' the bearer proudly announced. (TGIN-39)

Sir Richard becomes a victim of his own inability to translate correctly from English to Hindi. In intending to show his superiority and ability to master Hindi or Urdu, he reveals his own ignorance because ironically his commands have been followed: The attendant is able to understand Richard's combination of Hindi/Urdu and English, yet Richard does not realize that water- as 'object'/lota differs from water-carrier as ‘person’ /Bhist.
Thus through the course of this chapter powerful writing has an important role in challenging the superiority of the ‘colonizer’. Much of Sir Richard’s confusion and consternation is the direct consequence of his own monolinguality and inability to translate effectively from English to Hindi. For example, in discussing how to say 'close/open the door' (quoted above). Tharoor reveals the extent of Sir Richard’s ineptitude in that his character attempts to understand Urdu/Hindi by phonologically translating the language into English. If we closely analyze the example cited above, it is evident that Sir Richard substitutes English for Hindi/Urdu. It is worth looking at how the Hindi or Urdu is usually transliterated into English and then comparing it with Tharoor's actual transcription.

Typically, the command 'close the door' is transcribed as 'Darwaza bundhkarao'. In this novel it becomes "There was a banned crow". Juxtaposing the two transcriptions can explain how Tharoor derives his variant:

'Dar (There) waz (was) a (a) bundh (banned) karo (crow)'.

Similarly, the command 'open the door' is typically transcribed as 'Darwaza kol dhe', yet Tharoor transcribes it as 'There was a cold day'

Juxtaposing the two, 'Dar (There) waz (was) a (a) kol dhe (cold day)' allows us to see the relationship between the two phrases. (WLWIE-1&2)

In part, the humour from this passage derives from the fact that Tharoor plays with a variety of translational techniques to capture his message. Typically, languages with different graphologies will appear in an English language text through a process of transliteration. J. C. Catford defines this as a process in which "[Source Language] graph logical units are replaced by [Target language] units; but these are not translation equivalents, since they are not suggested on the basis of relationship to the same graphic substance"(66). Yet rather than transliterating the Hindi/Urdu into English, Tharoor finds lexical units in English to represent the Hindi. Catford defines phonological translation as "restricted translation in which the [SL]
phonology of a text is replaced by adequate [TL] phonology. The grammar and lexis of the [SL] text remain unchanged, except insofar as random grammatical or lexical deviations are entailed in the process" (56). In the example given above, Tharoor evokes humour through the phonological translations of 'close and open the door'. He relies on the fact that the reader will recognize the lack of semantic coherence (in English) in 'there was a banned crow'. When Sir Richard actually says 'There was a banned crow', he is supposedly speaking Hindi but this is not readily apparent to listeners. Only after the speech act does he explain that he has just spoken in 'Hindi'. The proverbial 'damage' has been done: Sir Richard is rendered foolish for believing that Hindi can be phonologically translated into English.

Tharoor thus creates a paradoxical situation whereby the reader who speaks only Standard English will only be able to view this text through certain restrictive windows whereas the reader with knowledge of Hindi will be able to see into this English text through an additional window. The reader versed in Hindi, as well as English will instantly notice the humor in the text. Through the act of translating 'back' to Hindi, the apparently nonsensical and ungrammatical phrases such as "There was a banned crow" or "There was a cold day" is undergirded by humor. Although this argument may resonate with privileging the view point of the 'native informant', it is perhaps a little too simplistic to dismiss this precisely because Tharoor is interested in writing a new English that is shaped by a particularly Indian subtext. Tharoor thus creates an important shift in this passage. He is writing for an English audience, but one can no longer understand English solely in terms of standardized versions. One has to be able to translate back into one of the Indian languages in order to understand his particular brand of English. In this context, he is constructing a type of language that is intralingual in character, and at the same time it takes place in an Inter cultural setting, thereby adding additional layers to the English in this text.
Tharoor's sole directive is to subvert the use of British English by pointing out to Sir Richard's follies under discussion. It is also important to keep in mind that he uses language in a laboratory manner so as to carve a niche to account for the Indian usage of English. Ashcroft et al. define this as "the refusal of the categories of the imperialist, its aesthetic, and its illusory standard of normative or 'correct' usage. It is a vital moment in the decolonizing of the language and the writing of 'English' (38). It is thus the literary effort to account for the use of English in post-colonial spaces.

For example, in a scene between Ashok Banjara, the protagonist and the dance master, Gopi in the novel Show Business, Tharoor writes:

'Sorry? Is my good name you will be ruining- What all is this, that will be saying. Gopi Master has forgotten what is dance.' His pectorals quiver in indignation. 'For you maybe doesn't matter. You are baccha. I am having fifteen years of experience in this business. What they will say about me, hanh?' (SB-4).

In The Empire Writes Back, Ashcroft et. al. posit that attempts at vernacular transcription intended to replicate speech patterns are common to post-colonial literatures (72-73). In this passage, Tharoor effectively captures the speech pattern in English of someone, like Gopi master, who is more comfortable speaking in Hindi or a regional language and seeks to follow the patterning of these languages when speaking English. Through the act of back-translation, the reader notices that this lexical unit which appears to be syntactically anomalous with the rules of Standard English, is in fact an entirely logical and valid syntactical unit.

Thus the question that ensues is, who is Tharoor's audience? Certainly, the on-going dialogue with Hindi and other regional languages places the Indian reader, or the reader versed in Indian culture and speech patterns in a privileged position. To extend the logic of post Saussure and linguistics, Tharoor plays on the notion that a gap exists between the 'signifier' and the 'signified'. At the level of the signifier, the text is certainly open to all. Yet in placing the
'signified' into this matrix, the 'meaning' embedded in language, one benefits from being closer to or familiar with the culture. A 'gap' emerges for some readers in that one may not be able to situate the denotative and connotative meanings signified by the signifier.

To view this as a means of alienation is somewhat limited. Perhaps a more useful way to understand this is to interpret it (as I have been suggesting) as an act of hegemonic reversal that simply seeks to reestablish the equilibrium in a balance that has place more weight on the side of the colonizer’s use of language. Tharoor, like Achebe accepts that English, as the colonizer’s language is a reality in the postcolonial setting, but he does not seek to uproot it from the land in which it has been planted. Rather, he seeks to go beyond this, systematically illustrating how the local climate and atmosphere has cultivated the language allowing it to burgeon into a new hybrid reality.

It is apparent that Tharoor is among certain writers that emerge from post-colonial spaces concerned with shaping language to fit a particular purpose. To use Ashcroft et al, s terms, he is a writer who abrogate and appropriate language to create a hybridized English. The examples drawn from his novels demonstrate that the palimpsest status of language is vitally important. The humor of the language derives from the bilingual character of the various signifiers. To see the humor embedded in the language, one has to dissect the language and find traces of Hindi or Urdu as applicable. One has to translate back in order to 'fully' understand certain aspects of these texts.

Thus, the construction of language as a palimpsest where English is layered over other languages exists as a model for the newer generation of post-independence Indian writers. Tharoor, however, take this process one step further and add humour into this process. This move becomes a poignant form of discursive resistance in that it becomes a forceful way to laugh back at the empire and the 'failure' of projects such as Hobson Jobson which aimed to
exert control by codifying and classifying the colonized subject in simplistic terms. Ultimately readers of Standard English are excluded from accessing certain levels of meaning.

An engaging reflection on the 50th anniversary of India's independence. Tharoor wears two hats with equal panache. A senior U.N. official, he is also a novelist; his book, The Great Indian Novel (1989), is a virtuoso feat. This volume blends academic analysis and personal observation on a whole range of topics and problems that India confronts—caste, religion, and economics. Tharoor passionately espouses a vision of a cosmopolitan, tolerant, liberal, and modern the same language, though in significantly different forms. Tharoor accepts the linguistic heritage of colonialism as a reality and uses English to break the historical shackles. He creates a language that can no longer monolithically be understood solely in terms of Standard English. Rather, he evokes a new hybrid linguistic reality that can be better accessed by translating between the languages of 'the colonized' thereby finding a discursive solution to reverse the cultural and imperialist hegemony of the past.

T.S. Eliot worked at Lloyds Bank, and Anthony Trollope, who wrote 47 novels, was a postal inspector. But among those appearing at this year's International Festival of Authors, Indian-born writer Shashi Tharoor has the most unusual day job. Tharoor who reads tonight at 8 at the Premiere Dance Theatre from his fifth book Riot: A Love Story is head of the United Nations Department of Public Information in New York. In the 23 years he's been at the UN, he has also worked for the High Commissioner for Refugees in Singapore and was responsible at UN headquarters for peacekeeping in the former Yugoslavia and from 1997 to 98 was Executive Assistant to Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

A role in world affairs and his writing are both equally important to Tharoor. Over skim-milk cappuccino at a Toronto cafe, dressed in the all-black international uniform of the intellectual, tossing his longish hair, he says: “If I neglected either side, my personality would
wither on the vine.” His personality is charming, witty and patrician with tendency to show off his erudition.

When told that *Riot* is a page-turner of a murder mystery, yet so packed with information about India as to serve as a primer on its social history and politics, he quotes Moliere in perfect French to the effect that the writer's goal should be edification through entertainment. "You write because you have something to say. All my fiction is aimed at getting readers to think, you have to find a way of conveying the information they need to think."

(Peacekeeper by day, writer by night)

The novel, *Riot* is based on a true event, the demolition in 1992 of the Babri Masjid mosque in Ayodhya by Hindu fanatics who wished to erect a temple on the site. In the riots that followed throughout the country, thousands of lives, Muslim and Hindu, were lost, the worst outburst of sectarian violence since Partition. On the night of the 'mosque's destruction, 3 fictional American aid worker, the idealistic feminist Priscilla Hart, is murdered, apparently in the riot. But as the story unfolds, through an ingenious sequence of newspaper articles, notes, letters; conversations, diary entries by Priscilla and the different people who knew her, we discover her secret love affair with a local official and piece together another explanation for her death.

The novel, *Riot* is, riding at the 'top of the bestseller lists in India; outselling Salman Rushdie's novel Fury. In each of his novels,' Tharoor has experimented with new forms, the epic in *The Great Indian Novel*, the film script in *Show Business*, the patchwork of different viewpoints and documents in new book *India: From Midnight to Millennium*. His virtuosity with language manifested itself in childhood; by age 10 he was a published author, with a story printed in an Indian children's magazine. He was educated in India but born in London, where
his father, died in 1993, worked on a newspaper on the business side. His father was not a writer, but he took Tharoor’s writing seriously and sent it around to get published.

Writing, Tharoor says, is "an alternative life." He writes his novels on weekends and nights, a habit he developed when his twin sons were babies and kept him awake anyway. They are now 17 and living in New York with Tharoor's journalist wife Tillotama, from whom he is separated. Tharoor is a secular Hindu, but one of his sons was screamed at in the street after Sept 11. It's not easy being brown in the U.S. now. You know they used to say it’s dangerous to drive in America while black. Well, now it's dangerous to be brown and airborne. This is not a war against Islam but terrorism. It would be tragic if we started discriminating against, people on the grounds of race and religion. Shashi Tharoor, a U.N. diplomat and novelist, introduces his new book, India: From Midnight to the Millennium, as "not a survey of modern Indian history, though it touches upon many of the principal events of the last five decades....It is a subjective account."

A highly engaging subjective account it is, making great use of the author's well-honed novelistic techniques. One of the best chapters, "Scheduled Castes, Unscheduled Change" narrates the story of his childhood's forbidden friend, Charlis, an untouchable boy in rural Kerala, who rises to become an I.A.S. officer. Charlis makes it, thanks to the "world's first and most rigorous affirmative-action program." India's affirmative-action laws reserve a minimum of 49.5 percent of federal government jobs for the previously disadvantaged or backward classes. Tharoor notes that opponents, now, often complain about reverse discrimination: "You can't go forward unless you are a Backward." Like many other observers, Tharoor sees "bureaucratic corruption and criminalization of politics as two of the most widespread problems facing India."
Writing about the early history of India, Tharoor provides some dazzling glimpses into India's glorious pre-Islamic period: "In the fifth century, the Malayali astronomer Aryabhata deduced, a thousand years before his European successors, that the earth is round and that it rotates on its axis, it was also he who calculated the value of pi (3.1614) for the first time; Bhaskacharya's understanding of gravitation a millennium before Isaac Newton; about the invention, credited largely to Gritasamada, of the zero and the entire system of decimal numbers." The so-called Arabic numbers, quadratic equations and trigonometry are among India's many gifts to world science. Equally impressive are early India's contribution to literature and philosophy. Writing about his native Kerala, Tharoor proudly notes its 100 percent literacy rate compared to the national 52 percent. (Updated studies indicate Kerala's literacy as 91 percent -- still the highest in the nation.) Tharoor has good words for New Delhi, "the first truly post-colonial Indian city, there are more plays, exhibitions and concerts on any single day in New Delhi than anywhere else in India." He lauds the Punjabi Sikh aid Hindu refugees for making New Delhi what it has become.

At the very start of his book on Jawaharlal Nehru, Shashi Tharoor declares candidly that he is not a scholarly work, nor is it based or painstaking research into previously undiscovered archives. It therefore contains no startlingly new insights. Even so, Nehru: The Invention of India - a "short biography" and a "reinterpretation" of material already in the public domain, as the author calls it merits a welcome. It is indeed a valuable addition to the literature on an extraordinary and many-splendored life and on the "inheritance it has left behind for every Indian".

At a time when it is open season on Nehru, Tharooor's book comes as a breath of fresh air because of the refreshing objectivity of his evaluation of a man who was a lot more than independent India's Prime Minister for the first 17 years. Nehru's mentor, indeed master, the
Mahatma, was India's liberator, the younger man, Gandhi's handpicked political heir, was its modernizer. Above all it was Nehru who laid firm foundations on the strength of which India proudly continues to be the world's largest democracy.

Tharoor takes note of all this and more. Being a gifted writer, with 11 books already to his credit, he does so with lucidity and in eminently readable prose.