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THE GREAT INDIAN NOVEL
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Shashi Tharoor is one of the prominent writers of the recent generation. He has been regarded as a post-modernist. Shashi Tharoor has grown up in Indian cities like Bombay and Calcutta. He has been involved in the field of journalism since his college days. He has also won the Rajika Kripalani Young Journalist Award for Indian journalist under the thirty. He is graduate from St. Stephen’s College, Delhi and Doctorate from USA. Shashi Tharoor has worked for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He has written several stories, articles and commentaries in the newspaper and magazines. The Great Indian Novel is his first novel and masterpiece.

*The Great India Novel* (1989) is a two in one narrative. The Mahabharata story and the History of India are interwine in the narrative. The characters from Mahabharata are recast by inducting the national leaders. This is first of the its kind in the history of Indian English Fiction. The Author himself states that *The Great Indian Novel* as: “an attempt to retell the political history of 20th century India through a fictional recasting of events, episodes and characters from the Mahabharata”.1
Portrayal of Freedom Struggle and its Consequences in The Great Indian Novel

*The Great Indian Novel* is rewriting of the Indian History from the national movement under the leadership Mahatma Gandhi to the regime of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. It is endorsed by Meenakshi Sharma in the following:

The historical account of India, which Tharoor presents in *The Great Indian Novel* covers a much longer time-period—from the nationalist movement to the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984. A host of important historical figures from the pre-and post-independence eras. Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah, Patel, Indira Gandhi, Krishna Menon, Sam Manekshaw, Arun Shourie— as well as major historical events such as the Salt March, Jallianwala Bagh, the assassination of Gandhi, the Emergency the General Elections of 1982, appear in the narrative. Yet the major thrust is upon the history of Gandhian movement in the mock epic mode. In this part an attempt is made to account for the portrayal of Indian freedom struggle and India after Independence to expose how the freedom struggle has been portrayed in periodic mode.
Caricature in characterization: Many prominent freedom fighters are used as characters in the novel. But they are not presented with their original identities. They are recast in the characters of Mahabharata, which is the first evidence of parody. Rajagopalachari is recast in the character of Vyasa. It is well a known fact that Rajagopalachari is not only a major freedom fighter but also one of the confidants of Mahatma Gandhi. He has worked in the Gandhian campaign ever since its beginning. Such a freedom fighter has been depicted as Vyasa in The Great Indian Novel. But the parody lies in the ironical portrayal of Vyasa-Rajaji. Rajaji is a conservative Brahmin and has had an image of a man of morality. But in the narrative he is a bastard son of Parashar and Satyavati. Besides, he is depicted as a polygamy by impregnating Ambika and Ambalika. Hence the portrayal of Rajaji as a bastard son and polygamy amounts to a parody.

Mahatma Gandhi needs no any proof for the claim of Mahatma. He has been inversely acknowledged as a Mahatma universally for his saintly qualities. But the portrayal of Gandhi in The Great Indian Novel is contradictory to that image. He is portrayed as Gangaputra-Bhisma in The Great Indian Novel. His contribution to the freedom of India is greatest of all the freedom fighters. It has been duly recognized by calling him the father of the nation. But in the novel his struggle through various campaign for freedom have been neglected. He is
projected as a matchmaker, a vile brahmachari and political schemer. This adds the character of parody to the greatest nationalist Gandhi.

Subhas Chandra Bose has an image of martyr in the history of freedom struggle. He is an ardent fighter for the freedom of India. His fame as a freedom fighter is next only to that of Tilak. Parting ways with the mode of Gandhian freedom struggle it is he who has given momentum to the militant and extremist way of fighting for freedom, which was introduced by Tilak. He has escaped from the prison and gone to Japan where he has established an army of Indian’s under the banner called ‘Indian National Army’ to win freedom for India not through non-violence but through war. Such a personality as Subhas Chandra Bose has been depicted as Pandu in the novel. The feature of parody in the characterization of Subhas Chandra Bose is found in showing him as an impotent. Further, he is portrayal to die not in his endeavour in organizing Indian National Army but while copulating with Madri.

Jawaharlal Nehru is also recast in the epic character Dharitarashtra. The image of Jawaharlal Nehru in freedom struggle is a popular one. He has been associate with Mahatma Gandhi for several years and fought for freedom struggle relentlessly. His father Motilal Nehru also is a great freedom fighter. Jawaharlal Nehru has gone to jail several times during the struggle for the freedom. On the merit of his
contribution to the freedom struggle he has become a very favourable person of not only the people of India but also Mahatma Gandhi. To honour him for his sacrifices Mahatma Gandhi has chosen him to lead the free nation has the first Prime Minister of India. In the narrative these qualities of Nehru have been ignored. He has been projected not as a freedom fighter but as an eminent Prime Minister of India but as a womanizer. He is portrayed to have neglected his own wife and be in the company of Jarjan Mountbatten. While Indira Priyadarshani is his daughter through his union with his wife, Draupadi is a daughter through his union with lady Mountbatten. By deviating the focus from the life of Jawaharlal Nehru in the freedom movement to his private life the narrative emerges as a parody.

Jayaprakash Narayan appears as Dronacharya in the novel. Morarji Desai appears as Yudhishtir. Indira Gandhi represents Duryodhani in narrative. K. Parthasarathi Manen stands for Lord Krishna in the narrative. These national leaders belong to the younger generation of freedom struggle which participated in the Gandhian movement actively they are well known followers. Though they have not contributed so much the freedom struggle as their elders have done, they are still our national leaders. But the narrative has not paid any head to their roles in freedom struggle at all. On the other hand they are portrayed as petty politicians. Therefore it may be considered that
the narrative distorts the history of freedom struggle by deploying caricature in creating the characters.

**Parody of National Movement in *The Great Indian Novel***

The narrative distrusts the belief that the national movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi has genuinely strived to fight against the British rule for the freedom. This distrust is expressed through the distortion of some of the important programmes and campaigns undertaken by Gandhi and other nationalists.

Gandhi is not presented as a national leader but has been ridiculed in various manners in the narrative. His sense of modesty by traveling in the third class train carriages is depicted with pinch of irony:

Ganga Datta didn't travel alone either. In later years he would be accompanied by a non-violent army of Satyagrahis, so that the third-class train carriage he always insisted on traveling in were filled with the elegantly sacrificing elite of his followers, rather than the sweat-stained poor, but on this occasion it was a band of ministers and courtiers he took with him to see Satyavati's father. Ganga D. would always have a penchant for
making his most dramatic gestures before a sizeable 
audience.³

Gandhi has been identified as Mahatma, as sage, the father of 
nation across the world. There is a great sense of reverence for Gandhi 
among the people of world. But his image is ridiculed by reference to 
him a "Porbandar Baniya merchant."⁴

Mahatma Gandhi is best known for the doctrine of non-violence 
it is believed that Gandhi could win freedom without any bloodshed. 
His advocation of non-violence has been presented with a strong note of 
satire:

Shall I tell of the strange weapon of disobedience, 
which Ganga, with all his experience of insisting 
upon disobedience and obtaining it toward himself, 
developed into an arm of moral war against the 
foreigner? Shall I sing the praises of the mysterious 
ammunition of truth-force; the strength of unarmed 
slogan-chanting demonstrators falling defenseless 
under the hail of police lathis; the power of wave 
after wave of Khadi-clad men and women, arms and 
voices raised, marching handcuffed to their 
imprisonment?⁵
Gandhi is known to the whole world as a man who has devoted his entire life for the freedom of India. He conceived the new programmes like ‘Quit India’, ‘Salt Satyagraha Movement’ etc., to get rid of the British rule in India. But the novel has not paid attention to these events. Instead, he is presented to be busy with experiments in celibacy, cow protection and practicing austerity. Mahatma Gandhi’s movements are made fun of by coining new terms for his programmes:

We Indians have a great talent for deriving positives from negatives non-violence, no-cooperation, non-alignment, all mean more, much more, than the concepts they negate.6

Gandhi’s Dandi March is fabricated in this novel. The reality of the Salt-satyagraha in history of freedom struggle is landmarks. It began on 12th March 1930 with historic Dandi march from Sabarmati to Dandi coast. On 6th April Mahatma Gandhi violated the salt laws and salt was manufactured all over the country as a revolt against the legal prohibition. Nehru was arrested on 14th April and picketing of foreign goods commenced intensively. The participation of woman was an unprecedented scale. The salt-satyagraha made a tremendous influence on Indians. Salt-Satyagraha upheld ideology of swaraj - by home made salt. Such a historic event of Indian freedom struggle is fabricated as the great Mango March in the novel. The satire on this Dandi March
evident in portraying this as: "A low-risk strategy" as undertaken Gandhi. The ironic dig at the image of Gandhi is explicit: "we are not led by a saint with his head in the clouds, but by a master tactician with his feet on the ground".7

Yet another stroke of satire on the image of Gandhi is traceable in the ridicule of Gandhi's principle Brahmacharya. On the eve of independence communal violence spreads like a wild fire across the country. It shows the defeat of Gandhi's doctrine of non-violence while the whole country witnesses violence Gandhi is bend upon proving his Brahmacharya by sleeping with Sarah-behn. This is portray in novel as:

'Many of you', he said, with that combination simplicity and shrewdness that was uniquely his, 'will notice a change in my sleeping arrangements from tonight. Sarah-behn will sleep in my room from now on-and in my bed'. He paused, seemingly oblivious to the consternation his words had engendered. 'Some of you may wonder what I am doing. What has happened, you may ask, to that terrible vow of old Bhishma, and the principles of celibacy he has enjoined on all of us? Do not fear, my children. Sarah-behn is like a younger sister to me. But I have asked her to join me in an
experiment that will be the ultimate test of my training and self-restraint. She will lie with me, unclad, and cradle me in her arms, and I shall not be aroused. In that non-arousal I hope to satisfy myself that I have remained pure and disciplined. And not merely that. It is my prayer that this test will help me to rediscover the moral and physical strength that alone will enable me to defeat the evil designs of that man Karna'.

The evidence of parody is expressed in the remarks of Krishna Mohan Pandey as "The way the whole description is given does injustice to the father of the nation."9

Every one knows that Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic (Godse) while Mahatma Gandhi was in his prayer in Birla House in Delhi. The death of Mahatma Gandhi has been regarded by all as martyrdom. Gandhi has died for the cause of the nation. But his death is portrayed with a great degree of irreverence in the narrative. The death, which was considered by all of us a national tragedy is presented in the most bitter manner:

'What a wreck you are, Bhishma!' the voice went on. 'What a life you've led. Spouting on and on about our great traditions and basic values, but I
don’t see the old wife you ought to be honouring in your dotage. Advising everyone about their sex life, marrying people off, letting them call you the Father of the Nation, but where is the son you need to light your funeral pyre, the son of your own loins? I’ve been looking everywhere, Bhishma, but he’s nowhere to be found!’ The visitor spat redly on the floor. ‘You make me sick, Bhishma. You life has been a waste, unproductive, barren. You are nothing but an impotent old walrus sucking other reptiles’ eggs, an infertile old fool seeking solace like a calf from the udders of foreign cows, a man who is less than a woman. The tragedy of this country springs from you – as nothing else could after that stupid oath of which you are so pathetically proud. Bhishma, the pyre has already been it for you in the flames that are burning your country. You have lived long enough!’

Gandhi is portrayed as having discriminated between Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose in their career in the Indian National Congress. He prefers Jawaharlal Nehru to Subhas Chandra Bose in the matter concerning to the opportunities of leadership in the Indian
National Congress. He misuses his authority in the Indian National Congress only to rear Jawaharlal Nehru and deprives Subhas Chandra Bose of the genuine rights to him. He sees to it that Subhas Chandra Bose does not grow as a national leader. On the contrary he shows over generosity to Jawaharlal Nehru. So that he enjoys higher position than Subhas Chandra Bose.

Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, who have been held in high esteem as nationalists, are recast in the mythical mould as Ganga Datta and Dhritarashtra. But the reconstitution of their personalities is characterized not by reverence but by its opposite. It is rightly noted by A.S. Rao:

The Great Indian Novel is a reconstructed text ‘yoking myth to history’: Shashi Tharoor’s irreverence to the national leaders is deliberate and a part of his new narrative technique and evolution of a new political paradigm. Great personages like Gandhi and Nehru identified with the achievement and emergences of resurgent and independent India searching the epithets of ‘Father of India’ and ‘Architect of India’ receive a total disregard at the hands of Shashi Tharoor.11
Subhas Chandra Bose also does not escape from the bitter criticism of the author. Subhas Chandra Bose is not projected as the one who has disowned every thing for the cause of the nation. His emigration to Japan for the formation of Indian National Army has been distorted. On the other hand he is found in the company of two wives in the forest. There he maintains celibacy in order to service from curse. But at one juncture he loses self-control and is tempted to gratify his lust with Madri:

Tow powerful beams of terrestrial light
Criss-crossed on the wings of Pandu’s Zero;
Revealing to Madri a last vivid sight.
On her breast, the beatific head of her hero.

Then she knew; and she smiled, in the stillness that followed.
The shell that was coming made scarcely a ripple.
She lifted his head, kissed him, slightly swallowed;
Then lowered him gently, his mouth to her nipple.

When the shell hit she could have sworn she felt.
A life-seeking tug at her soft swollen breast;
A split-second, perhaps, and then came a pelt
Of death-dealing shrapnel that tore open her chest.
For another split second the plane hung on there
Spotlit in the beams of the gunners below;
Then it burst into a flaming ball in the air
Burning crimson, consuming my son-and widow.\textsuperscript{12}

In the description of Subhas Chandra Bose the struggle of Subhas Chandra Bose for the formation of Indian National Army and the story of Pandu are mixed. Though it does justice to the epic it fails to do the same to the sacrifice of Subhas Chandra Bose as a freedom fighter. It is so because the description contains voluptuousness, which is unbecoming and unfair to describe the national hero like Subhas Chandra Bose who has died in a foreign land during his endeavour to organize an army to fight the British. It amounts to a bitter tribute to Subhas Chandra Bose.

Gandhi’s image in this novel is contrary to the traditional image of Gandhi as found in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan and others. From the beginning to the end Gandhi’s personality and ideology are satirized. The description of Gandhi is characterized by vulgarity, irreverence and ruthlessness. Mahatma Gandhi’s merits have been ignored. It amounts to negating the popular image of Gandhi as the leader of national movement.
Then the focus of narrative is directed towards the state of India under the leaders like Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Morarji Desai and Jayaprakash Narayan. It aims at exposing how democracy has been ruined during the tenures of these leaders. Draupadi represents democracy. Morarji Desai is portrayed as Yudhishtir and Mrs. Indira Gandhi stands for Duryodhana under the fictional name of Priya Duryodhani. Jayaprakash Narayan is portrayed as Dronacharya. The Pandavas and Kauravas are recast in the model of political parties such as the Janta Party and Congress (I) respectively. Dronacharya - Jayaprakash Narayan takes the sides with Yudhishtir - Morarji Desai. The remaining brothers of Pandavas are the allegories for Army, Press, and External Affairs etc. Bhima stands for Army, Arjun for Press and Nakul and Sahadev for External Affairs.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi is portrayed to have been grappling with the defence right from her younger days. This is shown in Priya Duryodhani as distributing or conspiring the death of Bhima. The rivalry gets intensified with the passage of time. Draupadi is married to the Pandava brothers and she becomes the target of Priya Duryodhani. Through the epic story Draupadi-Democracy lost by Yudhishtir - Morarji Desai to Priya Duryodhani-Indira Gandhi. The set back to Democracy through the declaration of emergency by Mrs. Indira Gandhi is shown through the epic episode of stripping the saree
of Draupadi. It suggests that Indira Gandhi has been ritually responsible for the ruin of Democracy in India.

Morarji Desai is also portrayed as a weak person of being unable to restore the past glory of India. He is reduced to a mere political opportunist. This shows that the national leaders have become corrupt and hypocritic. By forgetting their lineage with the patriotic like Gandhi, they are betrayers of our Indian Independence ideology.

Decadence of the Principles of Freedom during the Post-Independence

While the narrative dwells upon the hypocracy of the freedom fighters of the pre-independence period in the depiction of Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and Mohammed Ali Jinnah, it reflects the betrayal of the principles of freedom, especially the doctrine of Democracy, in the depiction of Morarji Desai, Jayaparakash Narayan and Smt. Indira Gandhi who belong the next generation during the post-Independence. A.S. Rao aptly notes this: “The hypocracy of the living personalities of Post-Independence political history is exposed to the core.” In order to go about this, the novelist has adopted an innovative method in the personification of democracy in the creation of Draupati characterization and of Press in that of Arjun. In order words,
the epic characters Draupadi and Arjun stand for Democracy and Press respectively in *The Great Indian Novel*.

Morarji Desai who is recast as Yudhishtir in *The Great Indian Novel* is portrayed as a weak and wicked character in the narrative. To begin with, Morarji-Yudhishtir is made fun of when the Pandava brothers seek the help of Drona-Jayaprakash to recover their ball, which has slipped into a well:

'Oour ball', replied Yudhishtir, the most direct. 'But how do you know who we are?'

'I know a great deal, my boys', came the answer. 'A ball, eh?' He looked with casual curiosity into the well. 'Is that all? You call yourselves Kshatriyas, and you can't even recover a ball from a well?'

On another occasion, Yudhishtir is portrayed as a coward. This is shown in the recast of the Bakasura episode of the Mahabharata. When the Pandava brothers along with their mother arrive at Ekchakra, they are told that a wrestler by Bakasura has camped there for wrestle match. Yudhishtir is asked to fight with him in the wrestling match but he refuses to oblige due to fear which slyly described as: "I'm planning to attend a lecture on the dharma of non-violence', Yudhishtir said when they looked at him instead.'Sorry."
In the above instances, the emphasis is more on the epic and the narrative turns to the state of affairs of modern India subsequently. Now Morarji-Yudhishtir is shown to be in the Congress party. After the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Congress chooses Smt. Indira Gandhi-Priya Duryodhani as the Prime Minister and Morarji-Yudhishtir as the Deputy-Prime Minister. The latter observes that he is ignored by the Prime Minister. He discloses how he has been subsided himself: "I'm Deputy Prime Minister but I know less about what's going on than my own Chaprassi. Hardly any files reach me, and my annotations on the ones that do are never acted upon." As a result he resigns his position in the cabinet.

After his exit from the cabinet Smt. Indira becomes a dictator she declares Emergency due to which many anti-Indira politicians are taken into detention. In the ensuing election, Drona-Jayaprakash supports election, Drona-Jayaprakash supports Morarji and the Janata Party emerges as the single largest party. Morarji is chosen by the members as the Prime Minister. Regarding this selection the narrative comments: "the irony of beginning the era of the restoration of democracy with so undemocratic a procedure." The tenure of Morarji Desai as the Prime Minister has been satirized in the narrative. Though he was a freedom fighter, Gandhian and a firm believer in democracy, he fails miserably to reconstitute the
country from the set back caused by his predecessor. He is portrayed to be busy with his therapy in urine drinking about which A.S. Rao notes:

in the case of Dharmaja-Morarji, whose fads are ruthlessly exposed, especially about his message to the people about the utility of auto-urine therapy. The funny coinage of 'Sharab Chodo, pishap peeyo' became a national joke in those days.¹⁸

His wickedness is best exposed in the subsequent episode in the narrative. Drona-Jayaprakash has become very weak in health owing to his imprisonment during the Emergency. Now he is in a dilemma of with drawing his support for the government under the Prime Ministership of Morarji Desai. Consequently he betrays Jayaprakash Narayan, which is depicted as:

'I realize that. And if he add his voice to Ashwathaman's I am finished Yudhishtir said matter-of-factly. 'The time has come for me to act as our ancestors would have done'. Without responding to my raised eyebrow, the Prime Minister beckoned to his youngest brother. 'Sahadev, I want you to go to Drona's house now and tell him Ashwathaman's plane back to Delhi has crashed.'
A look of genuine sadness appeared on the Prime Minister’s face. ‘I am sorry, Dronaji’, Yudhishtir said. ‘Ashwathaman is dead.’

To sum up, the narrative clearly suggests that free India suffers at the hand of the nationalists of the second generation in the episode of Morarji-Yudhishtir. Obviously Morarji is the one who had participated in the national movement led Mahatma Gandhi and who had inculcated Gandhian principles in his life style. The country has vested a lot of hopes in his leadership during the post-independence. On the demise of Lal Bahadur Shastri, the influence of desire for power is found on the mind set of Morarji Desai. This vested interest seems to be in operation in him due to which he fails miserably to save the democratic character of India.

Jayaprakash Narayan has been recast in two-in-one frame as Drona-Jayaprakash. At the beginning, the narrative shows its inclination towards the epic. Thus Jayaprakash Narayan-Drona along with his Ashwathaman arrives at Hastinapur and becomes a tutor to the Pandavas. He stays with them extending his full support.

Priya Duryodhani makes an invitation to Drona on the eve of Morarji resignation. From here, the narrative moves towards the politics of modern India. Again he is frustrated with Mrs. Indira’s dictatorial attitude, he comes away from her party: “Jayaprakash Drona
emerged from his retreat and called for a People’s Uprising against Priya Duryodhani.” In the forthcoming election Janata Party which was established by Morarji, and Jayaprakash Narayan wins the election. At this juncture Jayaprakash Narayan-Drona plays a pivotal role to choose the Prime Minister:

The two of us spoke individually with the leaders of each of the political parties that made up the Front. There were several of them, each with his claims to overall leadership: political parties, after all, Ganapathi, grow in our nation like mushrooms, split like amoeba, and are as original and productive as mules. Most of these leaders had at one time or another been in the Kaurava Party, but had left-or been pushed out-at various stages of the party’s takeover by Priya Duryodhani. Drona and I surveyed the unprepossessing alternatives and decided to go for the only one among them whose honesty and sincerity was as unquestionable as his seniority: Yudhishtir.

Jayaprakash’s conduct in this regard is governed by partiality. It is so because, he misuses the power vested on him to do Morarji Desai an undue favour. The narrative exposes this wickedness in
Jayaprakash Narayan who had been a freedom fighter. Thus the betrayal of the principles of Freedom Struggle by the very freedom fighters has been exposed in the above instance.

While Mahatma Gandhi has been the target of the satire of the narrative from among the celebrities belonging to the pre-Independence era, Mrs. Indira Gandhi is from among those who belong to the post-Independence period. Mrs. Indira Gandhi has been recast as Priya Duryodhani who is an embodiment of the hundred brothers of Kaurva’s. In a way it suggests that Mrs. Indira is a culmination of all tyrants and the greatest of enemy of nationalism.

Her role to jeopardize Democracy is depicted first in the attempt to kill Bhima. In other words, she causes a set back to Democracy by creating impediments to the defence. It is so because Bhima stands for Defence in the narrative.

During her tenure, Press has been denied its free functioning. This is portrayed in sending, Arjun who stands for Press, away from Draupadi. Later, the declaration of Emergency by Indira Gandhi is depicted through disrobing Draupadi. In this regard there is a strong suggestion that Mrs. Indira Gandhi is a betrayer of Parliamentary Democracy in the post-Independence India. In a way The Great Indian Novel prepares us for the negative depiction of Mrs. Gandhi through a piece of well-conceived anticipation. The picture of Mrs. Indira Gandhi
in *The Great Indian Novel* can be summed up with the observation T.N. Dhar makes as:

At first, Mrs. Gandhi tried to entrench herself by carrying out a series of populist measures, such as the abolition of privy purses and the nationalization of banks, which made hardly any difference to the people in general. Later, she promoted the culture of slogans, which replaced policies. Tharoor blames the left and progressive forces in the country, including recognized political parties, for being taken in by her rhetoric and bluster. In her own party, she reduced even cabinet ministers into non-entities. Her return to power made her more arrogant and dictatorial in her style of functioning. She succeeded in arrogating to herself the power to "prohibit, proscribe, profane, prolate, prosecute or prostitute all the freedoms the national movement had brought to attain...." (357). Events took on a dizzy turn when, after the Allahabad High Court judgment, she declared a state of emergency in the country, which proved the most disastrous part of her tenure. It is interesting as well as significant
that the emergency has been considered by the Indian English novelists as the most traumatic event of post-independence India. Sahgal devotes a whole novel to the emergency to dramatize its effect on the general ethos of the country. In Rushdie, it becomes the focal point of the degradation in the political and secular character of the country, which leads him to postulate two different kinds of India’s past. In Tharoor’s account, it is a part of the deteriorating democratic culture of the country, because of which the blame on Mrs. Gandhi is not as pronounced as in the other two. Tharoor understands the emergency in its very immediate context, when it was declared by Mrs. Gandhi.22

Perspective of Freedom Struggle

The Great Indian Novel is identical with Midnight’s Children in more ways than one. Indeed the subject matter, and the attitude towards Indian freedom struggle of these two novels are more or less the same. Like midnight’s children, The Great Indian Novel also dwells upon the theme of the failure of freedom struggle to create a unified
nation. Again the stories of our Indian Independence, partition and the Emergence in post-independent India are repeated. The attitude also is satirical on the above themes.

The only difference between *Midnight's Children* and *The Great Indian Novel* is that of the mode of narrating. While fantasy has been used as a mode of narrative in *Midnight's Children*. The mock-epic is mode of the narrative technique used in *The Great Indian Novel*. The history of modern India from national movement to the Emergence is narrated through the story of Mahabharatha.

*The Great Indian Novel* shares the post-modernist attitude towards the notions of nationalism especially the ideology of Gandhi. This has been reflected in various irreverent manners in which Mahatma Gandhi and his ideology are described.

Gandhi is described as being more busy with his experiments with brahmacharya, non-attachment, vegetarianism and Satyagraha etc. Mahatma Gandhi who is in the mode of Bhishma takes a vow of celibacy in order to help his father Vichitravira to marry Satyavati. It clearly indicates the deviation from the fact. In reality Gandhi takes a vow several years after his marriage and the birth of his children. But in this novel Gandhi is portrayed as an unmarried man in order to be faithful to the story of Mahabharatha. It shows an element of farce in the description of the father of nation Mahatma-Gandhi.
While the narrative remains faithful to the story of Mahabharatha with regard to the episodes of Bhishma it does not last long. Suddenly Bhishma – Gandhi is portrayed to be experimenting with sex in the company of Sarah-Behn. Though the narrative shows fidelity to the life of Gandhi here the same is lost with regard to Bhishma for Bhishma has had never such experiments at all. In a way it also amounts to ridiculing Gandhi by making his private life public. The ideologies of Mahatma Gandhi like non-attachment, vegetarianism and satyagraha have been not only distorted in the description of Gandhi but also portrayed as having failed in the post-Independent India.

This echoes in the biographical sketch of Nehru by Frank Mores Jawaharlal Nehru.

Mahatma Gandhi is chief principle-non-violence-which has stood by and preached throughout his life has suffered a dead blow in the post-Independent India. The first evidence of this is reflecting in the description of communal violence on the eve of partition. The second and the most important instance of this are reflected in the description of Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s Emergence declaration. This has denied the basic rights to the people of India and they are tortured under this act, which is against the principle of Gandhi of tolerance, Love and Non-violence.
On the whole one can infer that the perspective of Shashi Tharoor on the notions of Freedom Struggle, Freedom and Democracy is characterized by contradiction. Therefore, in *The Great Indian Novel* is regarded as not only the child of *Midnight's Children* by also as a novel protest against the conventional notions of such things.

**Conclusion - I**

*The Great Indian Novel* tells the history of Modern India through the story of Mahabharata. The Mahabharata deals with the theme of conflict between dharma and adharma. *The Great Indian novel* deals with the theme of use and abuse of freedom. The narrative comes as a vile review of the ethics of both the pre and post-Independence nationalists.

In this regard, the narrative portrays such nationalists as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Mohammed Ali Jinnah etc., as having been pseudo nationalists. During the era of post-Independence the narrative views that all those who had been associated with freedom struggle have become political power mongers in free India with least bothered about the well being of the nation. Rao notes the author's stand as: "He allegories the misrule of Congress Party at the center, extending to and after the times of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. He lambastes the policies and philosophies of Gandhiji
and philosophies Jawaharlal Nehru who done the roles of Gangaji and Dhritarastra Nehru in his mocks-serious methods of dramatization." Therefore, the perspective of the text amounts to saying that the notion of freedom is dead.

Conclusion - II

In Chapter Six, the study reveals that *Midnight's Children* negates the notion of nationalism. The narrative emerges as contrary to the traditional prespect in respect of the freedom struggle in more ways than one. First in the depiction of Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, the narrative suggests that freedom struggle in the path of non-violence ended up with violence only for several thousand people are killed in the massacre. Secondly, in the depiction of the death of Mahatma Gandhi and in the refusal to correct it purposefully the narrative amounts not only to contradicting the popular knowledge but also to disrespecting such nationalists as Gandhiji. Finally, in depicting Amina to be in relief in knowing that the assassin of Gandhi is a non-Muslim, the narrative suggests that the struggle for freedom has been forgotten no sooner than is freedom gained.

In the episodes of the post-Independence India, there is vivid account of the degradation of the ideology of freedom struggle in all walks of life. Thus *Midnight's Children's* perspective on the theme of
freedom struggle is post-realist or post-modernist because it regards that the notion of freedom struggle is dead.

Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* is similar to Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* in the perception of Modern India. While fancy has been deployed in *Midnight's Children*, our epic Mahabharata has been used as the framework to depict India from Gandhi's national movement to Mrs. Gandhi's Emergency. *The Great Indian Novel* portrays such nationalists as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohammed Ali Jinnah as pseudo freedom fighters. The depiction of Gandhi's death shocks the readers' knowledge of Gandhi's assassination. In the depiction of the leaders during free India, *The Great Indian Novel* asserts that the notion of freedom struggle and freedom has been exhausted.
REFERENCES

8. Tharoor, The Great Indian Novel, 228.