CHAPTER -I
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The purpose of this thesis is to study the works of Shashi Tharoor who is a post-colonial writer, so as to probe his excellence as a writer in depth and also the portrayal of India in his works. Tharoor has many books to his credit but out of them The Great Indian Novel and Riot are the novels for which he is widely known. The Great Indian Novel is a parody of 'Mahabharata' in which he has excelled in projecting the present day India. Even 'Riot' also portrays the 'psyche' of every Indian. Both these novels are not just stories but an in-sight into the contemporary Indian society. His novel 'Show Business' also falls in the same line, exposing the fallacies of Indian society.

Many writers before Tharoor have tried to present the image of India in the forms of travelogues, history and in the form of novels. Most of the Europeans presented India as an “exotic land of sadhus, snakes and suttee”.¹ The Europeans enjoyed projecting the people of India as primitive, uncivilized and barbarous. Thus very often they
have many wrong notions and misconception about India, and her centuries old civilization.

There are many Indian writers who have tried to convince the western world about the rich culture and heritage about the earliest human civilization.

According to Kanchan Kaur it was R.K.Narayan who “opened the eyes of the western world to an India that was till then, only a land of elephants and snake charmers”.\(^2\) Later, says Kanchan Kaur, that it was Salman Rushdie who “bedazzled them with Midnight’s children’. He took the whole ‘Indian metaphor and exaggerated it to a magical realism level’\(^3\).

In the present literary scenario of India Salman Rushdie’s children are fast multiplying. Shashi Tharoor is one among them. Thus here an attempt has been made to assess his works in depth and to study his image of India. One is obviously curious to know what exactly he talks about India because he has always said that he is very proud to be an Indian. He expresses this feeling in his work *Kerala God’s own country* when he says, “when we hear the name of India, we must swell with pride”.\(^4\) He strongly advocates that every Indian should have this feeling towards his country. Shashi Tharoor, who
was till recently, one of the top officials in United Nations and is a creative writer, obviously knows that every Indian does not carry this feeling of Indianness. This is the core problem that haunts Tharoor and he strongly argues that if India has to retain its image of civilized nation than it should act fast to be united.

Tharoor in his *The Great Indian Novel* tells the world that “India is not an underdeveloped country but a highly developed one in an advanced state of decay”.\(^5\) He is of the opinion that, “in fact, everything in India is overdeveloped, particularly the social structure, the bureaucracy, the political process, the financial system, the university network and, for that matter the women”.\(^6\) One is compelled to believe Tharoor’s opinion about this over developed country throughout his novel *The Great Indian Novel*. The social fabrication has become so vulnerable for riots that one can hardly believe that this is the country where so many religions co-existed for centuries. Even the politics and the bureaucracy of the land is largely known for its corruption.

In *The Great Indian Novel*, Tharoor says “I shall tell of past, present and future, of existence and passing of efflorescence and
Tharoor speaks of “an India that evolved a settled civilization 5000 years ago, an India whose level of art, architecture, literature and philosophy made it, perhaps, the most developed country on earth in 300 B.C, an India that invented the zero and the decimal system, an India that evolved two major systems of classical music and fine classical dance, developed highly sophisticated techniques of medicine and meditation, exported silk and spices, and was the birth place of four of the world’s major religious faiths as well as home to many more”. Tharoor leaves no chance to present India as a great country. He feels very proud of this country, which has given the world so much. So in his Bookless in Baghdad he says, “What is here is nowhere else; what is not here is nowhere”.
In the following chapters of this thesis an attempt has been made to analyse and interpret Shashi Tharoor's portrayal of India in his works. The first chapter highlights why this topic 'Image of India' in the works of Shashi Tharoor is taken for thesis writing; the second chapter throws light on the personality of Shashi Tharoor who is multi-dimensional; the third chapter tries to explain the changing spectrum of the society in India; the fourth chapter exposes the corrupt political system of post-independence India; the fifth chapter brings forth some horrifying glimpses of communal violence India is going through. The sixth chapter attempts in acquainting with the cultural aspects of the oldest civilization.

Throughout the thesis it will be discussed that Shashi Tharoor is dreaming of making India a 'nation', as he marks it in India from Midnight to the Millennium that a country was created by the Leaders of our nation and not the nation. He gives a call to the Indians to change their perceptions and provide space for the people of all beliefs and to live with one identity i.e., 'Indian'. He thinks "we are all in a state of continual disturbance all stumbling and tripping and running and floating along from crisis to crisis. And in the process, we are all making something of ourselves, building a life, a character,
a tradition that emerges from and sustains us in each succeeding crisis. This is our dharma”.10

The emphasis will be laid on the argument that this country belongs to the people of all faiths living in this country since ages, and not only for the Hindus. Tharoor illustrates this by saying “the Indian adventure is that of human beings of different ethnicities and religions, customs and costumes, cuisines and colours, languages and accents, working together under the same roof, sharing the same dreams”.11 Rajivlochan adds “that Hindus and Muslims in India do not belong to separate races. They have co-existed as communities in different parts of India for a millennium. Yet differences along communal lines have remained, mostly defined to cultural terms”12

Shashi Tharoor’s achievement as a writer can be assessed while comparing and contrasting him with two other writers who have depicted India in their works, namely Philip Meadows Taylor and Mrs. F.E. Penny.

Philip Meadows Taylor who worked as an Administrator in India wrote about India. His aim was to portray India as a civilized
country. He wanted to remove the misconception of the Europeans that India was a land of barbarism and superstitions. Taylor almost succeeded in projecting the real and civilized India in his historical Romances — *Tara* (1863), *Ralph Darnell* (1865), and *Seeta* (1872).

Mrs. Penny also stayed in India as her husband worked in Madras as a gazetted to the joint chaplaincy at St. George’s Cathedral in Madras. She has also portrayed India in some of her works like ‘*Caste and Greed*’ (1890), *The Romance of Nautch Girl* (1898), *The Rajah’s Daughter* (1921), *Love in a Palace* (1915). Though she has presented an exotic and beautiful picture of India most of the times she thinks that India is a primitive country which is caste ridden; superstititious with pagan practices; a land of devdasis, purdha and zenana system. She has failed in understanding the ‘India’ of rich culture and traditions.

Both Philip Meadows Taylor and F.E. Penny are ‘outsiders’ whose countrymen think that India is nothing more than a geographical expression.
The present post modern Indian writers in English who are ‘insiders’ staying outside India want to portray India not as a ‘country’ but as a ‘nation’. For these writers India is not a mere country but a ‘song’; a ‘myth’ knit in invisible threads.

Writers like Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry and Shashi Tharoor are not worried of what Europeans think about India. Their main concern is to make India a ‘nation’.

Salman Rushdie’s ‘Midnights Children’ completely changed the scenario of post-modern Indian writing in English. ‘Midnights Children’ is Political novel of India after independence. Saleem Sinai represents India after Independence. Saleem Sinai is born at the midnight of the independence which is symbolic of the birth of both India and Pakistan. Salman Rushdie discusses about the chaos of the political situation in India immediately after independence. Rushdie in length discusses about the Emergency declared by Mrs. Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay Gandhi’s projects of clearing slums in Delhi and Vasectomy camps to check the growth of population.
Shashi Tharoor and Salman Rushdie have many common problems of India for discussion. Tharoor also highlights about the Indian political situation and “Emergency”.

Shashi Tharoor closely resembles Rohington Mistry. Both depict ‘emergency’ declared by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Both of them tell the story of human spirit in the worst conditions. In both the novels ‘A Fine Balance’ by Rohington Mistry and ‘The Great Indian Novel’ by Shashi Tharoor expose the corruption and cruelty of ‘emergency’.

Indeed, Shashi Tharoor has carved a place of his own among the post modern writers of India, both as a creative writer and as a humanist. He is many personalities rolled in to one – an U.N official, writer, columnist etc., an excellent portrayer of India right from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. He feels proud to say “if Kashmir is all about men and mountains, Kerala is about women and nature”.

Shashi Tharoor’s achievements as a writer portraying India is worth noting because in the words of Dr. M. K. Naik “Here was a country so large and varied as to be a sub-continent offering almost every kind of climate, topography, and natural phenomenon; a history
stretching back to times immemorial; an ancient and rich culture with several equally significant strands in it; a variety of religious creeds, profoundest among those known to the world, and operative in actual life through practices which could satisfy every level of spiritual development; a social structure bewilderingly complex and a vast literature offering treasures of thought which had few equals in the world”.  

To portray the ‘psyche’, emotions and feelings of such a vast and varied India, which is a world in itself, is no easy task. Shashi Tharoor has done this with a startling finesse.

The chapter Social Image is about Indian social system existing since thousands of years. Here ‘dharma’ was the code of conduct. The focus is laid on the changing equations of the society. India which once boasted of Rama Rajya is changing fast after independence. Riots have become the common features of everyday. The politicians have been exposed as corrupt and vicious.

India contributed ‘zero’ to the world. Zero is both scientific and philosophical. Indian sages knew the importance of shunya and bindu since ages.
Class discriminations and caste discrimination are the oldest evils practiced in India. These discriminations divided people. Woman also falls in the category of discriminated. She was marginalized and kept away from many important works.

Tharoor in his Show Business says Indian cinemas are supposed to be the true vehicles of Indian society. Lot of hypocrisy of the society is exposed through Indian cinemas.

Still the greatest strength of India is, it has provided space for every one and everything without losing its original charm.

A healthy discussion is made about the strengths and weaknesses of the contemporary Indian society which is born and reborn hundreds of times.

The chapter Political Image highlights the political scenario of India since ancient times to present day contemporary India. India without politics is like ocean without water. The politics of contemporary India is exposed as a game of corrupt and foolish
people. "The great socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan once compared Indian elections to sheep choosing a shepherd".\textsuperscript{15}

Tharoor thinks the rule of British in India helped Indians to get politically united who were otherwise never united as a country and were living as small Kingdoms. Though they got united for the freedom struggle which they got, they were politically divided for ever after independence.

After independence, Tharoor says, Nehru was the most charismatic political leader of the masses. Nehru was India as long as he lived.

The politicians of India of post-Independence became very corrupt and communal. They played the cards of communalism intentionally to gain vote banks of the poor people. People have become fundamental and religious. For this reason Tharoor says "it is time to go back to these fundamentals of Hinduism. It is time to take Hindu dharma back from the fundamentals".\textsuperscript{16}
‘Emergency’ declared by Mrs. Indira Gandhi in 1970’s exposed the political leaders and their selfish motives which have remained as the blackest spot in the history of Indian democracy.

Tharoor says Indian cinemas and Indian politics are closely related. Film personalities in this country have succeeded in becoming the chief ministers of their respective states. On the other hand the siblings of Ministers have an easy entry in the world of celluloid.

After discussing the politics of contemporary India which is going through the phase of ‘identity crises’ and politics of community and culture, Tharoor concludes that India is created: what the people of India need to do is create Indianness.

The chapter Communal Image explains how different communities have existed with each other for thousands of years. Communal differences were always there in India but communal riots are on rampant after Indian independence. The scenario of post-Independence India has completely changed because of those unending communal clashes and riots.
During the Vedic times communities in India meant people of different castes within Hindu Religion. This was, existing recently till independence of India. The Britishers while leaving this country forced Indians to have new definitions of communities. In contemporary India communities particularly mean Hindus and Muslims.

Both the communities are on war with each other as some people of particular community claim India as only their country and others as the aliens.

Muslims came to India thousands of years back and settled here. They have exchanged culture and tradition with the Indians and have become part of India. They are not ready to bear the abuse of being called as aliens.

Tharoor feels that India is not facing single problem but multiple ones. According to him the differences between communities is not only among Hindus and Muslims. There are
innumerable differences even between Hindus and Muslims themselves.

The chapter **Cultural Image** discusses about the culture of the oldest surviving civilization.

The culture of India dates back to the settlement of Aryans on the banks of River Sindhu thousands of years back. After traveling through many ages, the culture of India has every possible element of different cultures on the earth.

Indian culture which is known for its rich art, music, literature and adaptability has adopted all the good things of all the existing cultures in India. At the same time, Tharoor's emphasis on Indian culture has never lost its originality or its identity. To Indians, culture is not an attitude but religion itself. However there is not clear demarcation between Indian religion and Indian culture.

Though Tharoor is all praise for the Indian culture he draws the attention also towards some of its evils in his literary works. Analysing contemporary India, he thinks that people are identifying
themselves culturally which means they are identifying themselves to a particular religion. This kind of cultural identity has become a threat to the integrity of India.

A serious and sincere attempt is made in the thesis to discuss the Image of India in the works of Shashi Tharoor. Shashi Tharoor is a creative writer who feels proud to be an Indian and writes about India both for its betterment and his undying love towards India.

Earlier Europeans presented India in very bad taste. For them, India was a place where uncivilized and barbaric people lived. For them India was nothing more than a 'city of joy' where semi-naked people lived. They thought India was a place of snake – charmers and dust. This projection of India either fascinated or repelled the fellow countrymen of Europe and West.

Tharoor in his Bookless in Baghdad says “the Kipling view of India was already countered in the 1930’s by Mulk Raj Anand’s Coolie and Untouchable and by Raja Rao’s immortal Kanthapura not to mention a host of works in Indian languages by Tagore, Premchand, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Subramanian Bharati and
others too numerous to list who used their writings explicity to give a voice to those who had been marginalized by the imperial narrative”. With these giants of Indian writers, time has come ripe to portray India to the westerners not as they wanted but as it is. The marginalized were occupying the central place. The contemporary Indian English writers are more dynamic in portraying India. It is apt to put in the words of T.N.Dhar “If Rushdie found that the History of Pakistan in ‘Shame’ could be represented only through tragedy and force, Tharoor felt that the History of India could be refracted only through the vein of satire”.

Roy Manju says, “India always matters immensely for him and, in all his works, he wants to matter to India”. Tharoor in all his works has tried to evoke a sense of nationalism. He is immensely worried about the future of India because of the changing equations in every aspect of India. Bhavani Shakuntala says “Shashi Tharoor in The Great Indian Novel, with superb verve, vivacity and a style eminently readable, adapts the Mahabharata story to project the recent political history of India”.
The story of India told by Shashi Tharoor is somewhat like the India of Rajiv Gandhi who feels “India is an old country but a young nation. I dream of an India-strong, independent, self reliant and in the front rank of nations of the world in the service of mankind”.21 After reading all his works it can be noted that Shashi Tharoor’s love for India is unfathomed.

Though he has worked with United Nations for the past twenty eight years, he has not written anything related to his office. The themes related to India never dry-up with this man. Manju Roy aptly says “Shobari Ganguli perceives rightly that you can take him out of India but you cannot take India out of him”.22 Manju Roy even quotes “India always matters immensely for him and, in all his works; he wants to matter to India”.23

“India is the third largest English book producing country in the world after United States and United Kingdom according to some estimates, and the largest number of these books are produced in English”.24 Tharoor thinks that Salman Rushdie is the head of this troop, but Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel hails Shashi Tharoor as a “major voice in contemporary literature”.25
This major voice of contemporary literature and India has strived hard both to uplift the image of India and solve the problems of the world as a senior United Nations official. In 1970’s he was involved in the famous ‘boatman crisis’.

Considering his contribution in the field of literature and his services as United Nations official, Tharoor was recently in the month of May 2007 was honoured with ‘Parvasi Bhartiya Samman’ award by the Indian Ambassador to the United States in Washington. This is the highest award for the Indians living abroad. This award was conferred “recognition of his valuable contributions in promoting the honour and image of India and is fastening the interests of overseas Indians”.

Tharoor has received these awards andapplauses as he has made a space for himself in the world of literature and in the world of peace keeper on the earth. His duties demanded lot of traveling around the world and he used to live most of the times in America. None of these reasons or exposures could corrupt him.
REFERENCES


3. Ibid. P. 3.


6. Ibid. P. 17.


23. Ibid. P.121.


