



**CULTURAL NATIONALISM IN SHASHI THAROOR'S
THE GREAT INDIAN NOVEL****Mr. Jagadish Angadi¹ and Prof. Nagaratna Parande²****¹Research Scholar, Dept. of English, Rani Channamma University, Belagavi****²Dept. of English, Rani Channamma University, Belagavi****ABSTRACT-**

India's huge territory is home to many different civilizations, and the wide range of racial backgrounds, religions, languages, clothes, rituals, customs, and traditions that coexist there have produced a complex culture. People from different ethnic, religious, caste, and linguistic backgrounds live in India, which adds to the country's diverse cultural fabric. This paper examines the intricacies of Indian culture, how democratic and secular ideals have influenced it, and the factors that could endanger the unity of the country. Its objective is to explore India's fundamental values, cultural components, and the political forces that unite the country. Furthermore, it illuminates the power dynamics that permeate Indian politics and culture, taking cues from Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*. With an emphasis on important subjects like representation, discourse, identity, and ideology, which have proven useful in the analysis of the novel, the importance of cultural studies in exposing authoritarian ideologies is emphasised.

KEYWORDS: Diversity, Indian Cultural Identity, Cultural Studies.**INTRODUCTION**

In order to fully understand Indian culture, a detailed analysis of India's plurality is required. Many writers have attempted to clarify the nuances of Indian culture in their writing. For example, Shashi Tharoor presents India as a nation and civilization, complete with all of its political structure, cultural richness, and nuances. In addition to highlighting the idea that India's diverse culture has developed over time as a result of polytheism, multiculturalism, multilingualism, and a wide range of customs, religions, and rituals, Tharoor also highlights the republican structure of India, which is divided into twenty-nine states and seven union territories. These elements are all based on the idea of "unity in diversity." *The Great Indian Novel* by Shashi Tharoor provides insights into the benefits and drawbacks of India's diversity.

DEFINITIONS OF CULTURE:

The words "cultura" and "coloured," which both denote "cultivation," are the roots of the word "culture." Culture is a broad term that includes religion, the expressive arts, folklore, celebrations, customs, and consumer behaviour. To put it another way, culture has traditionally been seen as a technique to achieve a more sophisticated form of human existence. It consists of a society's beliefs, arts, morality, customs, traditions, food habits, and way of life. It is pluralistic and diverse by nature. Human behaviour, social connections, and modes of expression differ greatly on a local and national level. A group's political ideology, language, dress, customs, and beliefs all reflect its culture.

Members of a community are brought together by common understandings, values, norms, and beliefs that enable them to discriminate between morality and immorality, right and wrong, and other distinctions. Tylor defines culture as "culture or civilization, in its comprehensive anthropological sense, encompasses knowledge, religion, art, morality, law, customs, and any other skills or habits acquired by individuals as part of a society" (23). According to him, civilization emerged from three stages of development: savagery, barbarism, and civilization. As a result, civilization came to be associated with culture, and because Western countries were thought to have achieved civilization, other societies looked up to them as role models.

INDIA AS A CULTURE

The unique quality of India's cultural variety is evident. It reflects a stunning spectrum of differences and includes a wide range of nationalities, religions, dialects, clothes, rituals, customs, and traditions. As a result, Indian culture resists attempts to be reduced to a single category by presenting itself as incredibly complex and diverse. It is necessary to explore the several aspects related to caste, language, ethnicity, religion, and area in order to fully understand its complexities. The foundation of India as a nation is not linguistic, religious, or ethnic homogeneity. Rather, it is a country whose citizens have a common history of rising up against the British Empire.

The Cultural Approach to *The Great Indian Novel*:

Shashi Tharoor's inspiration for writing *The Great Indian Novel* is explained by the omniscient narrator, who expresses a desire to explore themes such as the concepts of what is, what was, and what should have been, as well as the past, present, and future of existence, efflorescence and decay, death, and rebirth (18). The phrase "The Great Indian Novel" alludes to the old epic, with "Maha" standing for great and "Bharata" for India. Although this connection between India's past and present is intriguing, the author has made significant artistic licence in doing so, which begs the question of how certain truth and meaning can be. Tharoor's writing coincides with postmodernist concepts and is presented in both prose and poetry, often criticising renowned historical characters and attacking India's old epics and mythology from the liberation movement. The story embraces the idea of metafiction by constantly reminding readers that it is fiction. The eighty-year-old narrator Ved Vyas dictates his story to his amanuensis, Ganapathi, in eighteen volumes. The story is based on the Mahabharata.

The novel covers the history of India both before and after independence, starting with Gandhi's rise to prominence in politics and ending with his political successors' depreciation. In order to chart the development of Indian culture and the establishment of the Indian nation, Tharoor makes comparisons between historical individuals and mythological ones. In an interview with Geeta Pandey, Tharoor discusses why he decided to base his book on the Mahabharata, emphasising the work's secular storyline and endearing characters that represent common human vices like enmity, jealousy, greed, and dishonesty.

In his fictitious portrayal of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Tharoor draws comparisons between the tragedy that occurred in Kanpur during the 1857 Indian uprising, sometimes referred to as the Bibigarh Gardens massacre. Regardless of an individual's background, he aims to portray the inhumanity of violence against innocent people.

The Indian populace is furious and resentful at the acquisition of Hastinapur. Tens of thousands of men, women, and children assemble in the Bibigarh Gardens when Ganga Datta decides to speak to the public assembly there. At once Sir Richard resolves to step in and assigns Colonel Rudyard to the mission. Colonel Rudyard stands in for General Dyer, the man who was notorious for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and who, curiously, was described by British Nobel Laureate Rudyard Kipling as "a man who rescued India". Colonel Rudyard gives the order for his soldiers to fire on an unarmed, peaceful mob that is stuck in one of the gardens' little alleyways. As a result, 379 people lose their lives in a cold-blooded killing, while 1137 more are hurt. The House of Lords in England, shockingly, commends Rudyard for his deeds. The uncivilised actions of the ostensibly civilised colonial rulers, who imposed their will knowingly and deliberately, are highlighted by this tragedy. The narrator makes the point that

this massacre wasn't a spontaneous act of violence, but rather the deliberate imposition of colonial rule, in which the people were considered like things to be subjugated, controlled, and trained like animals, with the norms of humanity only applying to the rulers.

The Bibigarh tragedy undermines faith in the intentions of the British Empire, prompting Gangaji to devise a plan to take on his enemy. He audaciously proposes the use of truth and nonviolence as weapons in the liberation struggle, which aids in bringing the separated people together into a unified nation, an essential component of nation-building. The Quit India movement, led by Gangaji, was sparked by the horrors done by the British Raj, which solidified their status as the shared adversary of all Indians.

Ganga Datta opposes repressive British rule by using the values of truth, force, and non-cooperation. He needs to come up with practical plans to counter the oppressive colonial policies. Conflict breaks out in the Bengali hamlet of Budge Budge, on the banks of the Hooghly River, when jute mill workers seek a salary raise that the Scottish mill owners refuse, culminating in a lockout. Ved Vyas highlights India's rich history tainted by avaricious colonial powers in order to demonstrate his dissatisfaction with the country's economic and social situations as a result of colonial influence. He claims that colonial exploitation of India's former richness is to blame for the country's current state of poverty. Instead of sailing to a poor country, the British East India Company invaded India in order to take advantage of its wealth.

The modest salary expectations of their workers are being turned down by mill owners in the United Kingdom. Ganga Datta takes up the cause once more, but this time she goes on a hunger strike in order to demand a salary raise of thirty-five percent for her workers. Humanitarian Sara Moore, a jute mill owner's sister, backs Ganga Datta as she spearheads this initiative. Ganga Datta's vow to fast till death in the sake of justice is another potent strategy to undercut British rule. The owners of the Budge Budge mill are ordered by the governor of Bengal to give in to the demands of the workers. Ganga Datta learns the value and efficacy of fasting as a form of protest in Indian nationalism and recognises that self-sacrifice is the most efficient approach to realise his principles. Additionally, Tharoor emphasises the fasting's spiritual component, which is less important in today's Indian politics.

According to postmodernist theory, which Tharoor espouses, history frequently ignores the opinions of the oppressed in favour of highlighting the deeds of strong leaders at the expense of other people's contributions. In his description of India's independence movement, he highlights this point, pointing out that, although historical narratives focus on the deeds of a single person, life goes on in all its complexity. India is renowned for its togetherness despite a wide range of opinions, attitudes, and beliefs. This variety is mirrored in the country's abundance of points of view. Nehru and Bose's figurative Dhritarashtra and Pandu pursue Indian freedom in different ways. Influenced by socialist principles, Dhritarashtra promotes justice and equality but ignores the difficulties of putting socialism into practice in a large nation ruled by foreigners. Gandhi supports Nehru's nonviolent, forward-thinking philosophy. Bose, on the other hand, is in favour of taking a more aggressive approach against the British and encouraging an outward show of mistrust and hostility towards British rule. But his recommendations—such as not attending the Prince of Wales's coronation—are frequently ignored. Bose loses faith in the Congress Party's democratic stance as a result of his disregard for his recommendation not to attend the Round Table Conference. Adopting a sceptical and diverse stance, Tharoor acknowledges that ideas such as justice, dharma, and truth are very arbitrary, particularly in the Indian setting.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the novel captures the complicated political landscape, ideological divisions, socioeconomic intricacies, and varying interpretations of India's secular values while reflecting the country's multifarious identity. There have been observations made on specific power systems in politics and society that are intended to marginalise those who don't have a lot of authority. This has given light on how repressive narratives related to gender, class, and caste operate. It indicates that language, religion, and ethnicity, in the Indian setting, are not unifying factors; rather, they are causes of

divisiveness. India as a nation is united by a shared culture of integration, a longstanding legacy of tolerance, and a sense of belonging.

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