



## Narrative Techniques in the Selected Works of Shashi Tharoor

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**Abstract:** The study examines a few of Shashi Tharoor's works such as *The Great Indian Novel*, *Riot: A Novel*, and *An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India*, focusing on the narrative positions he adopts in these works. Tharoor's writing is a mesmerizing amalgamation of multiple perspectives, satire, historical attempts and mythical allegory, and documentary narrative. Through these approaches, he explores Indian history, nationalism, colonialism, community identity, and the nuances of postcolonial society. The study examines the techniques Tharoor employs – polyphonic and fractured storytelling, the mix of fictional and historical modes of representation, and the adaptation of traditional Indian tales. His narrative skills force the reader to reconsider the linkage between memory, identity, and power and to question the current historical and political narrative. The article argues that Tharoor's literary relation to the political and cultural realities of India is mostly shaped by his narrative approach.

**Keywords:** Historical fiction, numerous perspectives, satire, mythical allegory, narrative strategies, and postcolonial literature.

**Introduction:** Narrative is a significant way of building literary meaning. It explains the author's process for developing ideas, characters, and viewpoints and presenting events. Famous Indian English writer Shashi Tharoor looks at the historical, political, and cultural aspects of Indian culture in his fiction as well as nonfiction works. The political criticism, historical analysis, and creative imagination are all combined in his writings. He has often adopted a satirical, allegorical, ironic voice, multiple narrators, and unusual narrative structures to examine the complicated past and today's life in India.

*The Great Indian Novel*, *Riot: A Novel*, and *An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India* are the main subjects of this research. These are examples of different genres in literature and demonstrate how Tharoor can experiment with different techniques in the narration to suit a variety of topics. The book *An Era of Darkness* combines historical research with a readable, convincing story; *Riot* is a fragmented portrait of communal violence in multiple voices; and *The Great Indian Novel* is a rewriting of the Mahabharata to represent contemporary Indian history. Documentaries and social novels embody a general way of life, a certain social or professional group, and the whole of social experiences and emotions. The writers have made an effort to convey the spirit of Indian culture. The sense of loneliness, alienation, and self-excitement has been a significant part of realistic fiction during the post-independence period. Practical aspects of individual and social skills are integrated with personal and social phrases to look at society. Realistic literature's personal and realistic aspects take into account characters' emotions, goals, and interpersonal relationships. These people can occasionally become a part of culture and a general way of life since they are a part of society. In fact, Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh have been successful in their quests.

Politics, made-up Indian history, rebellion and dominance, internationalism and patriotism, urban daily life, family connections, and ethnocentric and religious beliefs are some of the fascinating facets of pan-Indian social reality. The second book by Tharoor, *Show Business*, was published in 1991, and was an attempt to understand India, its people, and 'Indianness' itself. The author's writing comes from a desire to care and to know, a



response to his concerns, asking: What do the Indians learn from these stories? As for Indians, what do they mean? What do we find out about the world in which these stories take place? These movies are made by the actors and directors who reside in that world. What does all this say about society in modern India? (Tharoor 131) *Show Business* distinguishes between "the real world of reality" and the "ambiguous world of cinema. It deals with the living of the present day in a humorous and satirical way.

The whole study is dedicated to "the complexity of the movie-world's neat polarization and the multifacetedness of reality", in Chelvakanaganayagam's own words, in *Exile and Expertise*. However, the emptiness of the Bollywood industry and the shiny demeanour of a film star is an unlikely combination of reality and fantasy (Kanaganayagam 49). It is the smart and talented writer Tharoor's new book about the Indian film industry that paints a picture of a ridiculous social system. But important social issues such as morality, violence, family life, Swiss bank accounts, and religion are discussed in movie scripts such as *Musafir*, *Godambo*, and *Dil Ek Quila*. When Tharoor published this book, he was expected to follow up on "The Great Indian Novel" with "The Great Indian Corruption of Cinema", but instead he surprised people with this one. Nevertheless, he did so because he thinks that Indian films, in spite of their shortcomings and outright irrelevance, contribute to the country's future hope. A nation's popular culture and ideals are mostly transmitted via movies. Over 800 films in 19 languages are produced each year by Bollywood and its provincial affiliates, which employ 2.5 million people. Their films are relatively cheap forms of entertainment and are often watched by the Indian audience. India's renowned filmmaking originates from and has always reflected the diversity of the pluralist society that creates it.

The narratives are repeated; Indian film, which believes in 'unity in diversity', welcomes content and content producers irrespective of language, culture, religion, food, attire, and so on, with moral and cultural values. It is the essence of India's pluralism and plays a pivotal role in the functioning of the cinema industry. Rai states that "the whole idea of Indianness is its pluralism" (86). In *Show Business*, Tharoor reveals that these entertainments and diversions tell us a great deal about him and other moviegoers. In the course of this, he is uncovering India. Tharoor turns to the Bombay film industry and the films he believes have been the primary way of communicating fictionality to many Indians, to confirm and rebuild a sense of Indianness. He gave his explanation for this film metaphor in an interview (Parmar 36).

In the second book, I explored stories from the famed film industry. Why? Films continue to be the primary means of disseminating fictitious experiences since 50% of people in our nation are still illiterate. You see a film to get your fiction, just as you listen to your grandma telling you stories on her knee. This book is a lighthearted yet humorous description of the Mumbai film industry, otherwise known as Bollywood. This book tells the story of Ashok Banjara, a political actor who is distraught and quits his cushy job to pursue his dream of becoming a Bollywood celebrity. This study aims to explore the impact of these narrative strategies on the representation of politics, history, identity, and postcolonial experience.

### Objectives of the Study

This study's main goals are:

1. To determine the main narrative strategies used by Shashi Tharoor in the chosen works.
2. To explain the use of satire, historical reconstruction, and mythical metaphor in *The Great Indian Novel*.
3. To analyze the use of multiple perspectives and broken narrative in *Riot: A Novel*.
4. To analyze how the narrative structure and historical thesis of *An Era of Darkness* relate to each other.

To explore how Tharoor's narratives and techniques further the understanding of Indian history and post-colonial identity.



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## Research Methodology

Based on a careful reading of the chosen original materials, the research takes a qualitative and interpretative approach. It examines the perspective, characters, language, symbolism, plot, and the history vs. fiction relationship. Postcolonial literature theory is adopted, as well as narratology. The core works' original editions, as well as a few academic materials on postcolonial literature and narrative theory, are used in the research. Rather than attempting to give a comprehensive description of all of Tharoor's publications, the analysis is in an interpretative mode.

## Review of Literature

In this context, it's worth recalling some of the comments from some of the reviewers and critics on Tharoor's book *Show Business*. In this "hugely entertaining" and "delightful depiction of India's popular silver screen," Shashi Tharoor "educates us while brandishing a needle-sharp sarcastic sword," according to the *Seattle Times*. After comparing politics and film, Prieta Maitra comes to the hilarious conclusion that "success in either depends on the growth of clever ways of fooling the masses. The story is "a tale of the debauched culture of modern India... and a cutting satire of it," the *Earth Times* reports. The writer also states that the work cleverly portrays the political, economic and cultural reality of India.

It is a "withering satire on the movie industry in Bombay... taken to a new and more global level that uncovers the similarities between movies and economics," says *Toronto Star's* Saros Cowasjee. *India West*, like *The Earth Times*, has "deeper insights concerning India's political and social realities. T. N. Dhar says the *Show Business* encapsulates Tharoor's personality. Shashi Tharoor's history, nationalism, identity, and political discourse in his fiction and nonfiction have been noted. It is critically discussed in several analyzes why the *Great Indian Novel* is connected with the *Mahabharata*, how it uses satire, and how it uses an indigenous literary structure to retell Indian history as it is occurring.

Narrative approaches can be used to analyse Tharoor's work. Gérard Genette's time and point of view theories in literature can be explained with the concepts of order, length, frequency, and point of view. Several voices and opposing points of view that are present in *Riot: A Novel* are relevant to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia. The analysis of his storytelling strategies in historical nonfiction and fiction offers an opportunity to examine how literary form is linked to political significance; while these methods develop and illuminate important aspects of Tharoor's work, they can also be compared to examine how form and purpose are interwoven.

## Theoretical Framework

Narrativeology is the study of story structure and the techniques employed to tell a story. In *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, Gérard Genette makes a distinction between a story's events and how they are told. Temporal and perspectival structures of Tharoor's works can be studied by means of his concepts of analepsis, prolepsis, duration, and focalization. According to the concept of heteroglossia, developed by Mikhail Bakhtin, there are many social languages and viewpoints and many stances within a literary work. This idea is especially helpful for comprehending the several voices in *Riot: A Novel*, as conflicting historical records add to the story's intricacy.

Postcolonial literary criticism explores the representation of cultural identity, colonial history, and the relationship between knowledge and power in the form of narrative. *The Location of Culture* by Homi K. Bhabha and *Orientalism* by Edward Said provide useful perspectives into Tharoor's subversion of dominant images of India.



## Discussion

One of the most noteworthy aspects of the narrative in *The Great Indian Novel* is the adaptation of the Mahabharata. Tharoor depicts the Indian independence movement and the political evolution of modern India through the epic, as a framework and symbol. This approach creates a dialogue between the political history of the twentieth century and Indian mythology. The well-known characters and storylines of the epic are changed by the historical context. The product will be a literary reinterpretation that connects the political experience of the modern time and cultural memory. The adaptation is also an attempt to tell Indian history in a pattern that is seen today in Western literature, which is also questioned. Migrating into a traditional Indian epic tradition, Tharoor demonstrates the power of Indian cultural forms to portray complex historical and political concerns. Satire is a key component of the style of the *Great Indian Novel*. Tharoor plays with the ambiguities of public life and political institutions through comedy, exaggeration, irony, and parody.

The author is able to challenge the discrepancy between political goals and political reality because of the novel's sarcastic approach. Historical events and people are portrayed in a fictional and mythical way, giving the traditional history of a particular group or event an ironic distance. Tharoor is also able to examine the intricacies of nationalism through irony. A complicated link between mythical time and contemporary historical time is used in the book. The twentieth-century period is portrayed through an epic framework of narration, and the resulting structure is multi-layered, as historical and mythical allusions overlap. This approach stimulates readers to learn from history through recurring patterns of war, power, and human aspirations. The book's narrative form highlights the role culture plays in shaping historical significance, as well as the significance of the events themselves.

*Riot* employs several different narrative perspectives to show how complex intergroup conflict can be. The book presents a range of perspectives, rather than relying on a single authoritative voice, through letters, journal entries, and interviews. Characters are able to convey various views of the same historical events because of its polyphonic framework. The viewpoints of Indian and foreign characters, governmental servants, locals, and other players in the novel's social environment are presented to the reader. The use of multiple voices is essential as it helps to prevent the story from being limited to a single cause of communal violence. It also calls into question the validity of testimony and the connection between personal recollections and societal history.

Another significant aspect of *Riot* is the epistolary form. Letters and diary entries give a sense of personal witness; interviews or other records contribute to a documentary aspect. These approaches are not easily distinguished from personal experience. While documentary documents link such experiences with broader political and social events, personal letters disclose feelings, connections, and personal interpretations. Several formats of documentation are also a product of broken historical memory, as they mix. This book suggests that learning about history can be done in many ways, depending on the perspective, knowledge, and life experiences of the historian. The lack of a coherent narrative is part of the depiction of community violence in *Riot*. The book reflects a diversity of voices and perspectives, not a unified story. This framework explains to the readers the intricacy of the historical events and the difficulty of building one indisputable narrative for the past. *An Era of Darkness* employs a mostly nonfictional and argumentative format, in contrast to the fictional stories of *Riot* and *The Great Indian Novel*. Tharoor explores Britain's presence in India from a historical perspective and makes some interpretative comments. This thematic arrangement enables the author to relate the historical events to more general statements about imperialism. The documentary aspect is significant since it is designed to challenge popular history on British colonization. The writing has a historical basis for a critical perspective on imperial rule, yet it can be read by a wide audience. To get readers interested in the historical argument, Tharoor regularly uses direct address and rhetorical questions. These methods encourage a dialogue between the author and reader. Rhetorical questions draw readers to reconsider their preconceived notions about colonial history. By contrast, direct address reinforces the link between the past and present political debate and



provides a conversational tone to the story. It is quite distinct from Riot's disjointed testimony and The Great Indian Novel's oblique metaphor.

Irony plays a major role in *An Era of Darkness*. Tharoor contrasts the impact of colonial rule with claims of progress by the colonizers. In the book, this difference is exploited to question the idea that the British Empire was a good thing and that it was about spreading civilization. The story centers Indian experiences and repercussions, turning the course of imperial narrative. Through the challenge of the legitimacy of imperial narratives and emphasis on the importance of historical reevaluation, the approach aligns with the postcolonial perspective of the work.

Indianness in *Show Business* Tharoor's 1992 second book, *Show Business*, satirically comments on the Bombay film industry. A Bollywood film was thus made out of the book. The story is about a famous film actor, Ashok Banjara, whose journey goes from being a struggling young actor to his fight to make it in the film industry, to his fight to come out alive after a fatal accident in a shooting zone. Amitabh Bachchan, whose life is very similar to that of the fictional hero, is the inspiration for Banjara. Banjara's ascent to the top of Bombay's economic film industry is set against a never-ending backdrop of the massive blockbusters in which he has starred, a vision that has taken over and transformed his life.

Cinema is a conceptual metaphor in Tharoor's use to explore some of the myths, especially in popular Hindi movies, and some aspects of Indian culture that he feels are vital to spread false experiences to the people of India. By means of a montage film tale, scripts, music, and monologue, he creates an invented world that becomes an art metaphor for deeper truths: delusion and actuality, aspirations and greed, love, deception, and death. This book is fun-filled and explores the glitz and glamour of the Hindi film industry (Hindi cinema), otherwise known as 'Bollywood'. The book reinforces Tharoor's reputation as a world-class writer and as one of the most popular persons in India.

Tharoor does Bollywood with a dollop of Hollywood, adding some glitz, conceit, and hypocrisy. To create a colorful, engaging and serious play, Tharoor has skillfully woven elements of the film industry into reality, such as the influence of privilege, sensuality, deceptions, politics and competition. This book is by no means sober, but rather exuberant and witty, describing the work of *Show Business Identity Conflict and Hybridization* in Bollywood, the mammoth Indian film industry in Hindi. Basically, it is a harsh satire on Bollywood, which brings to light the worst traits of the business – politics, ego, adultery, glamour, sensuality, privilege superiority (nepotism), and unethical practices. The career of the movie star Ashok Banjara (based on the real movie star Amitabh Bachchan) is faithfully chronicled across the novel.

The story begins with Ashok as a young martial artist trying to make it as a beauty globe, an epic car accident on a film shoot, and his life in a clinic. Ashok became estranged from reality because his Banjara movies had become blockbusters; his life became a world of dreams and his real life a confusing but interesting and exciting postmodern fiction. The stories are designed in a comprehensive way to create a fictional world that highlights the truth of life – love, death, passion, willingness, deceit, greed, and the difference between illusion and reality – in a "Bollywood style" dialogue, monologue, and music. Tharoor said in an interview, "I read about the popular film industries in the second novel. Why? The primary instrument of spreading fictional experiences is the film, and our country still has a 50% illiteracy rate (Kreisler 186). Ashok Banjara's role as a commercial, social, and economic personality in the field of beauty exemplifies the postcolonial idea of "hybridity" by Homi K. Bhabha. It's a story of the Indian movie industry in all its glory.

This is a book that examines the clash of the two kinds of fantasy -- literature and film -- on the surface. Tharoor, in a sense, uncovers and exposes the ideas, stories, and difficulties of contemporary India. Exposure to the Bombay film industry is tongue-in-cheek. It's a scathing indictment of the corruption of public life in India, but it is also a spoof on the Bollywood film culture. It takes the reader through the journey of a well-known film



actor, Ashok Banjara, who faces hardships on two fronts – getting back into the industry with a spectacular comeback and even after he suffers a severe accident during a film shoot. Banjara is based on Amitabh Bachchan, whose lifestyle is almost similar to that of the fictional character. The saying 'you're too tall, your legs are too long' is an example of this. Whatever, your back is too straight (Patil 123).

Tharoor uses a cinematic metaphor to consider the contemporary myths created by popular Hindi films and some aspects of Indian culture. He feels this is the need of the hour to communicate fictional experiences to the Indian people. *Show Business* deals with the intricacies of the movie industry as well as the fictional celebrity Ashok Banjara's rise to fame. In a number of interviews, Tharoor has elaborated on it not being Bollywood alone; it is about politics and religion as well. The story is about the broken morality of society as reflected in the Bombay film industry. Tharoor's political philosophy is that the current Indian political class is self-serving. They have a strong desire to amass wealth, property, and other possessions. Tharoor ridicules such a political agenda for advancing castes for the sake of the political agenda. The movie theater is a dream world. The film producer's job is to make everything clear, large-scale, enlarged, and straightforward.

In this film, life appears in Technicolour in black and white. There are several facets to postmodernism, such as postmodernism in literature, art, philosophy, architecture, fiction, lifestyle, and literary criticism, including postmodernism in the entertainment industry. The world of the present day is one that is characterized by the development of study and the explanation of the world. Authenticity, validity, certainty, differentiation, isolation, textuality and skepticism are examples of common connotations. All of Shashi Tharoor's work has been skilfully infused with postmodernism. *Show Business* (M. Bhavana 34) is based on the lives and experiences of a Bollywood celebrity of the Indian film industry and the Indian legislature.

It is a strong instance of the importance of success in the world of politics and cinema in India filming the fictional and political realities of India in a lighthearted and funny way. He is very accomplished at using the pastiche and postmodern parody techniques. *Show Business* is a vast use of pastiche by Tharoor. He depicts the economic, cultural, and social climate of the subcontinent, as reflected in the duplicity of its policies and films from Mumbai, which are dependent on Delhi.

The movie metaphor is used throughout this book as a compilation tool. Yes, there are honest politicians and Bollywood actors who pay their taxes. It has even an oxymoronic sound. *Show Business* exposes the one-sided thinking and perception of the modern Indian politicians and its impact on the governance of India. Tharoor's literary relationship with Indian history and culture is around storytelling, the research reveals. The employment of sarcasm, mythical allegory, various narrators, and documentary forms reveals not only that narrative is an adaptable mode for the representation of complex political and cultural realities, but also that it can accommodate the simultaneous presence of multiple perspectives. *The Great Indian Novel* is a translation of the *Mahabharata*, which will help to understand Indian cultural-based history in the present times.

The complexity of historical memory and social struggle is emphasized by multiple points of view and a disjointed narrative in *Riot*. Tharoor uses a documentary approach and rhetorical argument to critique conventional narratives about British Imperialism in *An Era of Darkness*. It is also demonstrated, through the comparison, that the narrative form is linked to the historical interpretation. Nonfictional techniques provide a structure for presenting information and argument, while fictional techniques allow Tharoor to "examine the symbolic and emotional dimensions of history. The many methods demonstrate the importance of shape in the production of literary and historical value.

## Conclusion

The study has focused upon the principal devices employed in the main text of the three works: *An Era of Darkness*, *Riot: A Novel*, and *The Great Indian Novel* by Shashi Tharoor. It has shown how essential to his literary techniques are satire, multiple narrators, fragmented narrative, mythical allegory, and documentary



reconstruction. The use of storytelling techniques helps Tharoor in his investigation of Indian history, nationalism, colonialism, community identity, and the awareness of postcolonial identity. The Great Indian Novel is a work that engages in dialogue between the modern and the traditional through its use of the Mahabharata. While An Era of Darkness's factual and rhetorical techniques enable a critical reading of colonial history, Riot's polyphonic structure symbolizes the intricacy of communal strife.

Furthermore, it showcases the unique gifts of Shashi Tharoor as a novelist by embedding Indian elements in his novels. Thus, film becomes a new metaphor for Tharoor to explore some facets of the Indian predicament. The author depicts Indian film culture in the context of contemporary mythologies. He has chosen to focus his study on the Mumbai film industry that offers a keen insight into the triumphs and tribulations that have marked the political and film worlds. Indeed, he creates a context to convey his underlying concerns. Tharoor's Show Business not only inspires but also teaches us about some of the darker sides of Indian life as well. It brings to the fore some of the political, historical, and economic issues of India and carries one into a wonderful world. It also depicts the multi-ethnic nature of a plural society and the happiness, sadness, postponements and tribulations of the majority of the Indians. Instead, even corporate filmmakers help define the culture of the community. Film is complex and intertwined with issues of identity, culture, and development. The author concludes that the elements of storytelling such as Tharoor's are important tools that shape political and historical understanding beyond their formal aspects. The genre of literary work can challenge dominant narratives, recover multiple perspectives, and encourage the reader to reconsider the relation between memory, identity, and history, as is evident in his writing.

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