

COLONIAL EXPLOITATION REFLECTED IN THE NOVELS OF SHASHI THAROOR

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Abstract :

Colonial exploitation has been a time old problem in case of India and the other colonized nations. The trauma of partition, financial backwardness, the split between Indian political leadership specially between the Hindus and the Muslims in colonized and de-colonized India are disastrous colonial impressions on Indian society. These colonial clutches later converted into autocracy of the British rule denuding the dignity, honor and the self respect of the Indians. Most of the times, many of the historians, biographers, archaeologists, research scholars have praised the British rule for civilizing the Indian people and the spread of modern education making it open to all. But the researcher feels that under the veil of administrative development and educational up gradation, there underwent a killing game of social, political, cultural and religious subordination and subjugation of the natives This paper aims to highlight the impact of colonial rule in India and its disastrous consequences faced by the colonized and decolonized India which are amply and seriously illustrated in the novels of Shashi Tharoor. Tharoor has enriched the post colonial fictional writings with his astonishing intellect and literary exuberance revealed in his works. He shows his serious concern for the politics and history of India giving major expression to the exploitative policies of the British Raj in India as one of the most debated themes in his novels. Tharoor has expressed his satiric opinions at different global platforms through his debates, lectures, oratory and in his fictional and non fictional writings. All his novels are full to the brim with his biting and satiric criticism of the colonial rule in India. Through his woks Tharoor wants to convey the satanic game of the colonial policies to the people in India and abroad as an eye opener which he strongly feels as the root cause of poverty and communal unrest in India. Like the post colonial writers, Tharoor does not believe in the rosy picture of India. On various global platforms Tharoor has exposed and examined the hierarchy of the British rule in India and its horrible consequences on Indian society. Colonial exploitation has been always discussed, argued and elaborated with all its destructive dimensions in his fiction and non –fictional writings. The predicament and the immeasurable sufferings of the Indian society always has been the main thrust of his novels and non- fictions.

Keywords : Colonial, British rule, exploitation, autocratic, hierarchy, subjugation, exploitative, sufferings, irreparable loss, colonized, decolonized, explosive, abuse



Introduction :

Shashi Tharoor as a global politician, a profound journalist and a sensitive writer conveys his ideas and views through the conscious study of historical, political and social situations in India in his works. He exploits the pluralism and multiple identities in India as main stuff.

A curious tour of Tharoor's works highlights his deep concern for the irreparable losses of lives and the financial damages in colonial rule. Demolishing and destroying small scale industries in Indian villages that paralyzed Indian economy find powerful expression in his works. In the 19th century when the whole world was heading towards scientific and agricultural advances and development, India was facing the hierarchy of the British rule. He believes that since the establishment of East India Company, the British started an unending series of physical, psychological, administrative and political exploitation of Indian society.

The term 'colony' comes from the Latin word 'colonous' meaning farmer. Imperialism and Colonialism are subordinator to each other. The term imperialism finds its seeds in the Latin word 'imperium' which means to command. Both these terms reflect the sense of dominance and subjugation of the natives or indigenous people. Colonialism denotes the system in which a country conquers, controls the other regions or territories. It also denotes a spirit of racial superiority among the colonizers. Colonialism is a practice of domination which involves the subjugation of one people to another. Colonialism later converts into imperialism which is initiated for the economic benefit and the exploitation of resources for the mother country from colonized region.

With the advent of the British in their search to settle colonies in India for economic benefit to England they established East India Company in 1600 and started the drain of natural resources of Indian territories. Gradually this colonialism converted into British imperialism that initiated the exploitation of the small scale industries and demolished the strength of the economy of the country. The British colonizers exploited India by many ways such as drain of national resources to Britain, the destruction of the Indian textile, steel making and shipping industries and the negative transformation of agriculture. In addition, the colonizers started enslavement of the Indian native population. They also introduced the modern education to provide cheap clerical class to strengthen their clutches of colonial administration.

Tharoor shows his serious concern for the autocratic rule of the British in his writings frequently. In his dynamic work *An Era of Darkness (2016)* Tharoor reveals that the British rule was very disastrous and devastating for India, an era of darkness throughout it which it suffered several looting, anarchy, slavery, manmade famines, wars, human exploitation and brutal violence. His another explosive work *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India* speaks of volumes about the hierarchy of the British rule in India.

Tharoor exclusively writes about political and economic upheavals in pre-independent and post independent India. Racial superiority, feudalism, subjugation of women and common masses, political rivalry signalize the perpetuation of colonialism in the form of neo-colonialism in Indian society and are profusely expressed in Tharoor's writings. The chapter also throws ample light on the exploiting economic strategies and tax policies, injustice



and suppression of the common class, divide and rule policy, communal violence, trauma of partition and its consequent bloodshed, split between Indian leadership in colonized and de-colonized India.

Similarly Tharoor opines that the communal disharmony, saffronization of politics and religion, the loss of moral values in politics, the criminalization of politics are the forms of continuation of colonialism in today's modern India. Tharoor has documented this crisis and the anxiety, tortures and torments as a sensitive writer in his works. All his writings embody his deep consideration felt for Indian soil. Thus, colonialism seems to have worst effects on an individual as well as national identity. Tharoor has presented the various destructive forms and phases of colonial exploitation in his works. Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* amply speaks about the political journey of partition and its aftermath in a serious expression. The failure of Gandhi as visionary, the split between leadership and the conspiracy of the colonial rule in division of India are seriously illustrated by Tharoor in the novel. His *Riot* expresses the biased attitude of the west and its media towards India. It is shown by Tharoor when Priscilla is insulted by Ramcharan Gupta, a staunch Hindutwa activist being a foreigner who develops her fascinations for Indian culture and surprise and questions the dedication of women for the family in Indian society. Tharoor asserts that though the colonialism is ended but the influence of the colonialism is ingrained in psyche of de-colonized India. His *Show Business* also exposes the criminalization of politics, self-centeredness of political leadership, winning of elections on caste calculations as the signs of perpetuation of colonialism in Independent India. Tharoor's novels and non-fictions reveal his deep and serious concern about British rule in India and its consequences on Indian society. It observes that Tharoor shows his deep anxiety about the British colonialism and its subsequent exploitation. He asserts that it denuded the dignity and honour of Indian people. It has been also noticed while going through his writings that Tharoor severely condemns and lashes out the British rule as the lethal and fatal source of physical, mental, social, cultural and religious exploitations on different grounds in his works. Through his writings he has made attempts to make realize the colonial exploitation in India as an eye opener to the English people as well as to the Indians. Tharoor always highlights the contemporary social issues that are closely related with the political scenario. He also treats history as his first love in his writings. He probes into the contrasts that exist within the present historical situation and traces it back to similar situations and circumstances that existed in ancient India.

Tharoor's novels drastically document his severe condemnation of British rule in India. Tharoor believes that the colonial rule in India and the continuity of colonialism after Independence practised by the native has distracted and disfigured this Great India and her rich edifice of values and ideal leadership. Tharoor has a great respect for India as a nation. But at the same time, he is aggrieved by the atrocities of colonialism and the poignant picture of the post independent political scenario of India. Both these aspects are clearly revealed in the novel. Tharoor reveals the inhumanity and tyrannical colonial rule when he writes:

"(By) The simple logic of colonialism ... The rules of humanity applied only to the rules, for the rulers were people and the people were objects ... objects to be controlled, disciplined, kept in their place and taught lessons like so many animals. Yes, the civilizing mission upon which

Rudyard and his tribe were embarked made savages of all of us and all of them." (Tharoor, *The Great Indian Novel*)

Again speaking on the treacherous 'act of looting' to India through the exploiting policies of the British Tharoor's narrator, Ved Vyas says –

"They came to an India that was fabulously rich and prosperous, they came in search of wealth and profit and they took what they could take, leaving Indians to wallow in their leavings." (Tharoor, *The Great Indian Novel*) and asserts that it was the British rule who "invented our poverty."

As a post colonial text, Tharoor's novel underlines the intervention of religion in national politics. It depicts that the 'divide and rule' policy of the British exploited the differences among the different Indian traditions, belief and values and shows that how the British "found the perfect opportunities in the religious distinctions, which India, in its tolerance that had so long and so innocently preserved." (Tharoor, *The Great Indian Novel*) As a true Indian, Tharoor points out that tactful interference of the Colonial Rule in Indian politics damaged the very fabric of Indian identity and created cleavage between the Hindus and Muslims which created the trauma of partition. Like most of the historians, Tharoor also holds responsible Muhammad Ali Jinnah for this inevitable division and violence after partition.

He brings out that religion had no concerns to politics but the British rule exploited the difference between religions for their own interests. As Vyas says: "No, Ganpathy, religion had never much to do with our national politics. It was the British Civil serpent who made our people collectively bite the apple of discord." (Tharoor, *The Great Indian Novel*) Bearing the loss of the great sire, Gandhi India marched on the path of progress as the largest democratic nation and Dhritrashtra (Nehru) was coroneted as the first Prime Minister of Independent India. Mohd. Ali Jinnah became the first President of newly born Pakistan. But the rift between two nations could never be repaired. His three novels and some of dynamic works of non-fictions like *An Era of Darkness*, *Inglorious Empire* reveal the fact that the atrocities, poverty and exploitation are the product of the colonial rule and the Indian people and nation has been paying great price for it till date. Tharoor delivered an explosive speech at a 2015 Oxford Union debate on the topic "Does Britain owe reparations to its former colonies?" This speech lashes out the damages and irreparable ravages that the colonial reign made to India and Indian ethnicity. At every global platform possible to him, Tharoor exposes and whips out the atrocities of the British Raj in India.

Tharoor shows his great craftsmanship in variations of narrative style and techniques to deal with the theme of colonial exploitation in his works. His satiric exposure of his characters and situations lingers in the minds of the readers. In *The Great Indian Novel* Tharoor has narrated the episode of partition of territories between India and Pakistan with rib tickling humour and comic dimensions showing excellence in narrative skills. As a post colonial and post-modern novelist he shows his great refinement in variation and experimentation in narration in his works. His novels are full to the brim with artistic and linguistic novelty as a stylist. His works remain outstanding specimens as unique historical and political narratives for the readers. Tharoor amply uses all the weapons of parody, irony, pun, satire, subversion intertextuality and so on to heighten the desired effect of his narratives. His playfulness and



word play with irreverence and subversion keeps his works lasting in the memory lane of the readers.

Tharoor's use of myth and mythology is one of the most debated and illustrated aspects of his narrative style. As a post colonial writer Tharoor employs the great classics like the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* and other treatises to project the kinship between the prosperous past and present restless Indian situation. While Iravati Karve calls the old classics as stories of exploitation of womanhood and Salman Rushdie finds magic realism in it, Tharoor interprets them as national historical narratives and guiding force for today's India. Tharoor's unique sense of humour is widely known throughout the globe. He turns, twists and transforms the words of criticism in such a amazing style that even the worst critic on him enjoys and appreciates it.

He lashes out the autocratic rule of the "Brits" in his novels in unique Tharoorian narrative style. His creative energy and artistic excellence, his clever use of nursery rhymes, all weapons of satire and parody and the like find powerful expression in his works. Tharoor's poetic excellence and poetic good sense culminates in his expression of parody of British rule in India. His prose interspersed with poetry is also dominant aspect of his genius as a post colonial writer.

Conclusion :

Shashi Tharoor always speaks of India and Indian issues. He has a strong faith in the plural identity of India. the morbid situations in social and political realities in India tortures him and he tries to explore the real India in his world of fiction. He does not present a rosy and silky picture of India but a truthful and realistic picture. Belonging to anti-colonial and post colonial school of Indian English novelists, Tharoor tries to capture the very essence of colonial hierarchy in Indian history, politics and culture in his novels. The emotional and financial exploitation of the native poor class from the capitalist class and self centred political leaders using religion as a political agenda are the powerful expressions of neo-colonialism. It is amply evidenced through the gender inequality and women subjugation in Indian society. This sense of superiority felt by Indian male oriented society is nothing but the perpetuation of colonial clutches on Indian society and they are seriously expressed in his works.

His interpretation of history brings out the reassessment of India, Indian thought, Indian democracy and Indian leadership. His political novels always deal with the historical journey of Indian politics and political realities. In his analysis of multiple cultural aspects, Tharoor often brings into prominence the cultural, social and religious diversity in society as marks of colonial exploitative and discriminative policies. Tharoor extensively and seriously writes about the trauma of partition in all his novels. He considers it as the biggest failure of the Indian freedom struggle. He believes that partition of India and Pakistan is the only shattering event in Indian history which has affected all the facets of the social, economic, religious, historical, political and cultural life of Indian society as well as of Pakistan. The partition issue has been deeply introspected and amply condemned as a threat to national identity in all his novels.

Thus, Tharoor holds responsible to the exploitative British colonial rule for unemployment, sectarian violence, orthodox and superstitious mindset, illiteracy, ignorance,



women's subjugation, self centred politics and partition as the causes of despair and poverty in India in most of his novels and non-fictions.

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