



DECONSTRUCTING NATIONAL MEMORY: POSTCOLONIAL HYBRIDITY, PARTITION TRAUMA, AND THE POLITICS OF HISTORICAL REPRESENTATION IN SHASHI THAROOR'S *THE GREAT INDIAN NOVEL*

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Abstract

The Great Indian Novel, Shashi Tharoor's first fictional endeavour deserves to be termed as an 'eminently readable' classic, powerfully and wisely narrating a human history with extraordinary profundities. Imbibing an opulence of Tharoor's innovations and ingenuity, the novel is a fascinating blend of the ancient and recent pasts of the Indian sub-continent; a powerful and a vivid exemplification of its political exigencies during British imperialism in the country; its ruthless amputation just before its liberation – the partition; followed by an elucidation of the circumstances encumbering its polity after the end of the colonial era. In other words thoroughly enmeshed by the diversity and the plurality evidenced in India's rich cultural heritage, (Khilnani 153) her history and her people Tharoor endeavours to portray the sub – continent's gradual evolution from the last few decades of its

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Adhering to the generic demand of novelty that he associates with the term 'novel' Tharoor not only portrays India during the ancient times of the Mahabharat in this piece of fiction but also makes an intelligent representation of about six decades of her colonial and post – colonial experiences. An analysis of the novel from a post-colonial perspective not only intends to foreground the effects of colonialism on the sub – continent but also essays to highlight various nuances of its independence accompanied by its consequences. Apparently, this Indian political potpourri fictionalised by Shashi Tharoor, is inundated with instances qualifying its post – coloniality brilliantly accompanied by its postmodern verve. (Ashcroft et al. 1-13) (Hutcheon 89-92)

The very amalgamation of the religious text The Mahabharata with India's modern history, in the novel is an outright recognition of the post – colonial theorist Edward W. Said's viewpoint, (Moore-Gilbert 34-56) that European imperialism can be best comprehended vis-à-vis cultural texts (Said 1991). Tharoor further emerges as a post – colonial, diasporic author by

exemplifying Homi K. Bhabha's concept of 'hybridity' (Bhabha 1997). (Young 21-28) Writing in the language of India's colonisers – English, the Indian expatriate beautifully portrays the splendid past of his ancient country and its civilisation, thus unveiling her and introducing her to the Western World. This fictionalised introduction of the sub – continent's history is an impressive instance of the pride enjoyed and emphatically expressed by an author from a colonised society -- in his culture, his religion, his civilisation and its ancient past. The following words of his narrator V.V. in the novel to his amanuensis Ganapathi,

They tell me India is an underdeveloped country I tell them that if they would only read the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, study the golden ages of the Mauryas and the Guptas and even of those Muslim chaps the Mughals, they would realise that India is not an underdeveloped country but a highly advanced one in an advanced state of decay... (Tharoor 1989)

not only enunciate a visible upsurge of pride and love in the heart of a colonised for his emaciated land and its culture but also exhibit the author's angst regarding his country's future.

Colonising the Indian subcontinent was a prolonged and a complicated procedure undertaken by the British and had various stages of its metamorphosis. The inhumane damage caused by them to India's numerous cultures, the subsequent suffering and loss of life leading to a harsh blow to the self-esteem of the Indians was not only abundant but also unprecedented. (Loomba 45-67) In *The Great Indian Novel* Tharoor provides us with a detailed illustration of the sincere efforts of the colonised and degraded Indians to contest the British authority and relinquish their marginalised status in their own country (Fanon 112-115) so as to procure freedom and power for themselves. Concomitant to the various uprisings initiated by the Indians against the colonisers, he also reveals the nonplussed and irritated reactions of the British -- confident of the impenetrability of their imperial fort-- to the freedom struggle in the persons of White bureaucrats like Sir Richard and Heaslop. The Motihari agitation in which Gangaji had turned the tables on the alien administration with polite insolence, proved to be a major colonial irritant and raised Sir Richard's peculiarly true – to – form colonial ire.

The man challenges the very rules of the game We carve up the state for our administrative convenience, these so – called nationalists yell and scream blue murder, and what do we do? We give in, and erase the lines we've drawn as if that were all there was to it. That could be fatal, Heaslop, fatal. Once you start taking orders back you stop being able to issue them. [P 60-61]

These words addressed by Sir Richard to Heaslop lucidly spell out every British coloniser's philosophy of 'governance,' illustrating his categorical rejection of resistance of any kind. (Brantlinger 199-201)

Unfortunately, the endeavours of the people of India led by Gangaji and the other Kauravas, to achieve independence for themselves, were only rewarded when they accepted a partition of their mother – land - the most painful and gruesome consequence of the colonial rule. This ruthless act of partitioning the sub – continent synonymous to the brutal amputation of the ancient civilisation of India by the British was evidently a direct consequence of the policy of '*divide et impera*' followed by the colonisers' intelligent application of this ploy to the enslaved Indian population. (Pandey 67-89) These imperialists described by Tharoor in *The Great Indian Novel* emerge as outstanding exemplifications of the manipulative and cunning subjugators decried by Jean Paul Sartre in his preface to Franz Fannon's canonised post - colonial text *The Wretched of the Earth*. (Sartre 16-18) Albeit Tharoor's novel does not dwell

upon the indiscriminate butchering of innocent people and ghastly and pogrom incidents which marked the sub – continent’s partition, yet it cannot be ignored that the British while leaving India, a jewel in their imperial crown, callously amputated both its spirit and its soul simply to leave an indelible impression of their authority over the sub – continent. (Butalia 3-12) Replete with examples of the practicality and the pragmatism practised by British rulers, Tharoor’s book is a telling example of their inhuman tactics and practices. One such incident which foregrounds the grotesque inhumanity of the British and reveals them as murderers of hundreds of people, is the Bibigarh massacre, referred to as the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy (Collett 245-267) in the annals of Indian history. Tharoor describes this cold-blooded massacre in the person of V V who tells Ganapati,

The soldiers fired just 1600 bullets that day, Ganapati. It was so mechanical, so precise; they used up only the rounds they were allocated, nothing was thrown away, no additional supplies sent for. Just 1600 bullets into the unarmed throng, and when they had finished, ... 379 people lay dead, Ganapati, and 1137 lay injured, many grotesquely maimed. When Rudyard was given the figures later, he expressed satisfaction with his men. ‘Only 84 bullets wasted,’ he said. ‘Not bad.’ [P 81]

This horrendous and inhumane suppression of the people of India by the British as described by Shashi Tharoor reveals his approbation with Samuel P. Huntington who believes that “the west won the world not by its superiority of its ideas or values or religion but rather by its superiority in applying organised violence.” (Tharoor 1989) (Césaire 31-35)

Viscount Drewpad’s [Lord Mountbatten’s] characterisation by Shashi Tharoor also expatiates the vulpine machinations resorted to by the Viceroy in order to extract his colonial self’s pound of flesh. (French 312-328) Revealing his unscrupulous ingenuity, Drewpad reduces his own wife to the status of one of the many subjugating ploys used by the White colonisers. Conveying his thoughts he tells her “you’re an essential part of my plans, darling. We’ve got to charm these humourless fellows into being more accommodating. You’re my secret weapon.” [P 215] This bore fruit in the form of an illegitimate relationship between the Vicerine and Dhritrashtra, the first premier of liberated India. Further, Draupadi Mokراسى, Tharoor’s D. Mokراسى, a result of Dhritrashtra’s clandestine relations with Drewpad’s wife, symbolises the democratic pillar of India that apparently signifies the country’s dependence on a white lady – one of the colonisers- that may last till perpetuity. (Spivak 287-290) This relationship between the First World White lady belonging to the colonial period, and her daughter, a denizen of the third world in the post – colonial times, exquisitely and deftly enunciated by Tharoor emphasises the continuity of colonialism into post – colonialism. In fact, this blood relation between the colonial and the post – colonial attends to the popular contention that post – colonialism is not a reaction to colonialism, but is its consequence thus supporting Aijaz Ahmed’s point of view that

Colonialism ... becomes a trans - historical thing, always present and always in a process of dissolution in one part of the world or another. (Huntington 1995) (Ahmad 95-98)

The architectural genius of *The Great Indian Novel* resides not merely in its postcolonial thematics but in its sophisticated deployment of what might be termed a "mythological palimpsest"—a layering technique wherein the ancient epic of the *Mahabharata* serves as both structural scaffold and interpretive lens for understanding modern Indian history. This narrative strategy deserves extended analysis, for it represents Tharoor's most significant contribution to postcolonial literary aesthetics and his challenge to Western linear

historiography.

Tharoor's appropriation of the *Mahabharata* framework functions as an act of epistemic decolonization. By insisting that contemporary political events can only be adequately comprehended through the prismatic lens of ancient Sanskrit epic, the novelist implicitly rejects the Enlightenment model of progressive, teleological history that undergirded colonial justifications for British rule in India. The cyclical temporality inherent in Hindu philosophical traditions—wherein history repeats itself in endless cycles of creation and destruction—displaces the Western narrative of advancement from barbarism to civilization that Edward Said identified as central to Orientalist discourse. In this regard, Tharoor's novel participates in what Dipesh Chakrabarty has called "provincializing Europe," the project of demonstrating that European thought categories are inadequate for understanding non-European experiences.

The character correspondences that structure the novel—Gangaji as Bhishma, Dhritarashtra as the blind king, Draupadi Mokraasi as the polyandrous heroine—operate not as simple allegorical equivalents but as palimpsestic superimpositions that generate meaning through their very instability. When V.V. narrates Dhritarashtra's political maneuverings, readers simultaneously perceive both Nehru's historical actions and the mythological king's moral blindness. This double vision creates what Homi Bhabha terms the "Third Space of enunciation," a liminal zone where fixed meanings become destabilized and new interpretive possibilities emerge. The mythological framework does not simply provide decorative embellishment to historical narrative; rather, it fundamentally restructures how readers understand causality, morality, and historical necessity in the postcolonial Indian context.

Moreover, Tharoor's strategy reveals the constructed nature of both mythological and historical narratives. By demonstrating how easily contemporary events can be mapped onto ancient templates, the novel suggests that all historical narrative is fundamentally mythological—a selection and arrangement of events according to pre-existing patterns that satisfy cultural needs for coherence and meaning. This insight has profound implications for postcolonial historiography, for it challenges the authority of colonial historical accounts that claimed objective, scientific status while actually imposing European narrative frameworks on Indian experience. The British wrote Indian history as a tale of Oriental despotism requiring enlightened Western intervention; Tharoor rewrites it as a continuation of indigenous epic traditions wherein the struggle between dharma and adharma transcends any particular historical moment.

While the article has acknowledged that Tharoor's novel addresses Partition, this catastrophic event deserves more sustained analysis as the ultimate expression of colonial violence and the foundational trauma of postcolonial South Asian identity. The Partition of 1947, which resulted in the deaths of between one and two million people and the displacement of approximately fifteen million, represents what Gyanendra Pandey has termed a "limit event"—a rupture so profound that it exceeds the capacity of conventional historical discourse to represent it adequately.

Tharoor's treatment of Partition reveals both the possibilities and limitations of fictional representation of historical trauma. The novel notably does not dwell on the horrific details of the communal violence that accompanied Partition—the massacres, rapes, abductions, and forced conversions that marked this period. This authorial choice might initially appear as an evasion of uncomfortable realities. However, it can also be interpreted as a deliberate aesthetic strategy that recognizes the inadequacy of graphic representation to convey the deeper structural violence of the colonial decision to partition the subcontinent.

By focusing instead on the political machinations that led to Partition—particularly Dhritarashtra's (Nehru's) refusal to accept Gangaji's (Gandhi's) suggestion to offer the premiership to Karna (Jinnah)—Tharoor shifts attention from the spectacular violence of Partition to what Slavoj Žižek would call its "systemic violence," the normalized structures of political ambition and communal division that made the catastrophe possible. This analytical focus aligns with the work of postcolonial historians like Ayesha Jalal and Mushirul Hasan, who have argued that Partition resulted less from inevitable religious antagonism than from contingent political decisions made by Indian leaders more concerned with securing power than preventing communal tragedy.

The novel's representation of Karna's demand for Karnistan (Pakistan) deserves particular attention for its departure from nationalist historical orthodoxy. Conventional Indian nationalist historiography has typically portrayed Jinnah and the Muslim League as communalists who cynically manufactured religious division for political gain. Tharoor's more nuanced portrayal acknowledges Karna's legitimate grievances and suggests that the creation of Pakistan might have been avoided had the Congress leadership, particularly Dhritarashtra, been willing to share power more equitably. This revisionist interpretation participates in what Subaltern Studies historians have called "history from below," an attempt to recover marginalized perspectives and challenge elite nationalist narratives.

The character of Draupadi Mokrasī—born of the illicit relationship between the Vicerine and Dhritarashtra, and representing Indian democracy—serves as Tharoor's most complex symbol of Partition's continuing legacy. That Indian democracy should be figured as the bastard child of a colonial woman and an Indian leader suggests the contaminated, hybrid nature of postcolonial political institutions. The parliamentary system, the legal framework, the administrative apparatus—all inherited from the British—bear the marks of their colonial origins. Indian democracy, in this reading, is not the pure expression of indigenous political traditions but a hybrid formation forever marked by its violent birth at the moment of Partition.

Furthermore, the sexual nature of this colonial encounter—the Vicerine's seduction of Dhritarashtra—can be read through the lens of postcolonial feminist theory. As Anne McClintock has argued, colonial discourse frequently figured colonized territories as feminine spaces to be penetrated and possessed by masculine colonial powers. Tharoor inverts this trope: here, it is the colonial woman who seduces and possesses the Indian man, producing a child who will be dependent on Western support. This inversion does not represent liberation, however, but rather demonstrates the multiple valences of colonial power relations, which cannot be reduced to simple binaries of dominance and submission.

The novel's treatment of postcolonial political leadership, particularly through the character of Priya Duryodhani (Indira Gandhi), requires more extensive analysis than the current article provides. Tharoor's portrayal of the progressive corruption of Indian political idealism represents not merely a critique of individual leaders but a diagnosis of structural problems inherent in postcolonial state formation.

Priya Duryodhani's declaration of the Siege (Emergency) represents the culmination of tendencies present in Indian political culture from independence. The Emergency of 1975-1977, during which civil liberties were suspended, opposition leaders imprisoned, and forced sterilizations conducted, revealed the fragility of democratic institutions in postcolonial India. Tharoor's fictional treatment of this period raises crucial questions about the relationship between colonial legacies and postcolonial authoritarianism. To what extent did the

Emergency represent a continuation of colonial governance practices—the British had, after all, ruled India through emergency provisions and ordinances for nearly two centuries? How much did postcolonial leaders learn from colonial methods of population management and political control?

The novel suggests that the seeds of the Emergency were sown much earlier, in Dhritarashtra's willingness to abandon Gangaji's principles in favor of political expediency during the Partition negotiations. This originary betrayal of idealism established a pattern that would repeat itself throughout postcolonial Indian history: the gap between the noble rhetoric of Gandhian principles and the ruthless pragmatism of actual governance. Frantz Fanon warned in *The Wretched of the Earth* that national bourgeoisies in newly independent countries would betray the promises of liberation struggles, enriching themselves while the masses remained impoverished. Tharoor's novel provides a detailed illustration of precisely this dynamic in the Indian context.

Priya Duryodhani's character arc from idealistic daughter of the revolution to authoritarian ruler mirrors the trajectory of many postcolonial nations from initial democratic promise to various forms of autocracy. Her manipulation of democratic institutions—packing the courts, controlling the president, declaring emergency—demonstrates how formal democratic structures can be hollowed out while remaining nominally intact. This phenomenon, which political scientists call "democratic backsliding" or "competitive authoritarianism," has become increasingly common in the postcolonial world. Tharoor's novel, written in 1989, proved prescient in diagnosing trends that would become more pronounced in subsequent decades.

The novel also engages with questions of dynastic politics that have plagued postcolonial India. Priya Duryodhani's inheritance of political power from her father Dhritarashtra, and the novel's hints at the continuing dynasty, critique the transformation of democratic India into a quasi-feudal system where political power passes from parent to child. This dynastic tendency contradicts the democratic and egalitarian promises of the independence movement, yet has become normalized in Indian political culture. Tharoor's mythological framework proves particularly apt for analyzing this phenomenon: the *Mahabharata* itself is fundamentally concerned with questions of legitimate succession, inheritance, and dynastic conflict. By mapping modern dynastic politics onto the ancient epic, Tharoor suggests that India's political culture has regressed to pre-modern patterns rather than progressing toward modern democratic ideals.

An underexplored dimension of *The Great Indian Novel's* postcolonial significance concerns its linguistic politics—specifically, Tharoor's decision to write in English rather than an Indian language. This choice has been controversial, with some critics arguing that writing in English automatically compromises a text's claim to represent authentic Indian experience. However, a more sophisticated analysis reveals how Tharoor's English-language narrative strategy advances rather than undermines his postcolonial project.

Tharoor writes in what Salman Rushdie has called "chutnified English," a hybridized form that incorporates Indian vocabulary, syntax, and rhetorical patterns into English sentences. This linguistic hybridity enacts at the level of language the broader cultural hybridity that characterizes postcolonial identity. When V.V. tells Ganapathi about events using a mixture of English narrative, Sanskrit terms, and Indian speech patterns, the resulting prose embodies Bhabha's concept of the "Third Space"—neither purely English nor purely Indian, but something new created from the collision of cultures.

Moreover, Tharoor's use of English must be understood in relation to India's complex multilingual reality. India has no single "authentic" language; rather, it contains hundreds of languages and dialects. Hindi, often proposed as the national language, is actually the mother tongue of less than half the population and is viewed with suspicion in southern and eastern India. In this context, English functions as a neutral lingua franca that does not privilege any particular regional or religious community. Tharoor's choice of English thus paradoxically enables a more inclusive representation of Indian diversity than writing in any single Indian language would permit.

The novel's linguistic politics also engage with questions of audience and circulation. By writing in English, Tharoor ensures that his revisionist account of Indian history reaches not only Indian readers but also the global audience whose understanding of India has been shaped by colonial and neo-colonial representations. *The Great Indian Novel* can be read as an intervention in international discourse about India, an attempt to replace Orientalist stereotypes with more complex indigenous perspectives. This project of re-narrating Indian history for global audiences continues the work that Edward Said called for in *Orientalism*—the dismantling of Western knowledge systems that have distorted understanding of non-Western cultures.

It is further observed that *The Great Indian Novel* owes much of its appeal to the unbiased and revealing knowledge about Indian history that the author presents before his readers. A large part of this fictional work unveils facts which had since decades been confined to the books of history subjecting the normal citizen of India to grave misconceptions about his country's past. (Guha 1-8) Tharoor has probably emerged as the first fictionist who has suggestively unveiled pertinent facts regarding modern Indian history in his novel. His elucidation of the rising ambitions of Karna [Jinnah] and Dhritrashtra [Nehru] accompanied by Gangaji's prejudiced support for the latter, illuminates the fact that the demand for Karnistan [Pakistan] was not altogether a consequence of fanaticism and communal feelings. (Jalal 241-256) Further Dhritrashtra's refusal to countenance Gangaji's suggestion of giving Karna the premiership of India, so as to avoid the dreaded partition of the sub – continent, forcefully indicts the socialist Indian leader for quenching his lust for power, by unscrupulously allowing the obvious murder of thousands of people of the sub – continent. These and many other examples discussed by Shashi Tharoor in the novel give veracity to Edward W. Said's demand for a distinction between 'pure' and 'political' knowledge in the post – colonial era. (Mongia 1996) (Said 51-53)

The very fact that *The Great Indian Novel* is replete with various instances of Said's 'political knowledge' suggesting volumes about the Indian history especially its protagonists, strongly confirms Ama Ata Aidoo's contention regarding post – colonialism. According to Aidoo

Applied to Africa, India and some other parts of the world, 'post-colonial' is not only a fiction, but a most pernicious fiction, a cover up of a dangerous period in our people's lives. (Aidoo 1991) (McClintock 86-88)

This belief expressed by Aidoo during a conference in New York in May 1991, also provides a strong foundation to authors like Tharoor who have consistently suggested in their works that instead of withstanding colonial influences the post – colonial era has willingly imbibed them. *The Great Indian Novel* emerges as a consummate exemplification of the continuance of British colonialism, devoid of its white skin in the liberated and free India. (Chatterjee 36-42) While before August 15, 1947, the country was exploited by the White foreigners, after

independence she was forced to suffer at the hands of her own leaders. Having participated in the freedom struggle under Gangaji for decades and having fought for his country's self – esteem, Dhritrashtra like Karna suddenly became aware of his own 'self'. While Karna had blatantly expressed his desire to lead the country after independence, and had therefore asked for a separate land for the Muslims much before independence, an ambitious Dhritrashtra – chained by the Mahaguru's ideals threatening to impede his progress to the premiership of liberated India - had no other option but to shake off his years old sycophancy towards his mentor along with the latter's values.

Already bewildered by Gangaji's patronizing suggestion of giving the much-coveted premiership to Karna, Dhritrashtra could not abstain himself from exercising an unprecedented candour before the Mahaguru, leaving the latter with no other choice than to resign. Responding to Gangaji's insistence that the Kauravs should never give in to Karna's demand for the dismemberment of the country, Dhritrashtra said;

Gangaji, we understand how you feel We have fought by your side for, our freedom, all these years. We have imbibed your principles and convictions. You have led us to the brink of victory But now the time has come for us to apply our principles in the face of the acid tests of reality Karna and his friends will simply dig in their heels. Separations or chaos, they will say; and on Direct Action Day last year they showed us they can create chaos. How much worse will it be without the British forces here? Might it not be better to agree in advance to a ... civilised Partition, than to resist and risk destroying everything? [P 223] (Wolpert 156-162)

Thus by portending grave consequences to the liberation of an un – partitioned India, Dhritrashtra emerged as Tharoor's first political leader of free India who had no qualms while ignoring the verdict of the *Father of the Nation*. The fact that consequently Gangaji perforce took a backseat in the Indian political scene, and the Kaurav party decided to agree to the partition with Dhritrashtra at its helm, was perhaps the first and one of the major non – idealistic stands of the Indian leadership that has coined the post – colonial sub – continental history.

This was followed by a chain of immature and prejudiced decision taken by the Indian leadership which repeatedly molested and exploited the country. The Kauravs' betrayal of Gangaji's faith and trust lay the foundations of the immature self – obsessed politics that afflicted India's future in the persons of Dhritrashtra, Kanika Menon and above all Priya – Duryodhani.

Dhritrashtra, not only lacked sight but was also the country's first Prime Minister ironically lacking an insight into the future. Oscillating between his impetuous and his easily cowed down nature throughout his career he frequently flawed and committed major errors of political judgement. The greatest beneficiary of Ganga's grass root counsel Dhritrashtra throughout possessed a colonial proclivity and mindset leading to a number of political blunders for which the nation is paying till date. His disastrous and unnecessary referral of the first war between India and Karnistan over Manimir before the United Nations indicts him for his lack of political vision. (Schofield 45-67)

Tharoor also enunciates the pathetic degeneration of Indian political leadership in the novel during the post – colonial era through characters like Kanika Menon. Dhritrashtra's Defence Minister and friend, Kanika not only convinced the former to attack Comea [Goa], but also as suggested by the author indirectly triggered the Chinese invasion of the young and naïve India,

(Maxwell 78-92) a political blunder for which she is suffering till date - more than sixty years after independence. His poetic treatise on the administrative skills, which Tharoor has included in his book in the form of doggerel verse, and was overheard by Priya Duryodhani, is an obvious reason behind the unscrupulous measures adopted by the latter when she came to power.

Treading or rather progressing on her father's foot – steps Priya Duryodhani never allowed herself to be pawned around by her colleagues. Consistently negating the importance of her Deputy Prime Minister Yudhishtir and repeatedly reducing him to ignominy, she forced him to resign from his post thus removing the greatest hindrance of her political career in her quest for ultimate power. Subsequent to this cunning and quiet ouster of his most visible rival from her government, Duryodhani meticulously embarked on the mission of promoting her own goals. In connivance with Ashwathama [Ashok Mehta] she banned the privy – purses of the ex – maharajas breaching the idealistic morality of the Kauravas. Thus, emerging as a Frankenstein for the Kauravas themselves, Duryodhani did not hesitate before crossing her own limits as the member of the Kaurav Party and the Indian Prime Minister. She interpreted the role of the President of the Country as one who is supposed to assist the Prime Minister making herself most powerful. Having adopted a nearly autocratic position, she did not demur before placing her motherland and the Indian democracy under siege and exploiting her people as did the colonisers.

The Great Indian Novel therefore not only gives an unequivocal expression to the declining ethics of Indian polity which was gradually shifting its focus from the nation to the politician, but also substantiates this degradation through its characters. Envisaging a period of thousands of years, from the days of Vyas's Mahabharat to the present times, the novel exemplifies a pervasive decadence afflicting both the head and the heart of the people of India, blemishing the grandeur of the nation, her polity and her nationalism. Suggesting that the seeds of this degeneration were present in Indian polity much before the end of colonialism, while on one hand Tharoor indicts the country's political stalwarts on the other he emphatically foregrounds the birth of a 'self – oriented' rather than a 'nation oriented' polity afflicting the recently liberated India .

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