

CONCLUSION

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CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Historical discourse and literary practices share a common domain in contemporary culture. Current approaches to cultural historiography have brought theoretical tools from literary and cultural studies into historical practice. Historical writing, in this regard, is subject to various “literary” determinations that shape the perceptions of the past. Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra are major poststructuralist historicists who look upon history as inevitably subject to ‘literary’ conventions and linguistic determinations. The work of LaCapra offers a ‘dialogical’ concept of historiography that acknowledges both the otherness of the past and the inevitable intrusion of contemporary theory and politics into the process of historical reconstruction. Thus, history, in the present time is inextricably intertwined with ideology and textuality—an integration of fact and fiction into what has been called *Faction*.

A journey through the analysis of the works of a brilliant author with faith in the viewpoint of *Faction*, gets completed in this thesis. Since any research is a re-search of existing facts, discovering the unknown possibilities and establishing new theories, the same has been done in the works of Shashi Tharoor only from the angle of **Faction**, as befits the topic “A Study of *Faction* in the Works of Shashi Tharoor.” An in-depth examination of the author’s works has necessitated one to do inter-

disciplinary work because from the thought that every Indian must carry with him in his head and heart, his own history of India (his story) as pictured in *India: From Midnight to the Millennium*, and the sense of humour mixed with considerable wisdom shown in *The Great Indian Novel*, we go on to a world of the most sublime form of prize fiction in his collection of short stories—myths, ideas and fascinating imageries throw a myriad of ecstatic colours in the aesthetic mind of a student of literature. The works of Shashi Tharoor have a wide range to cover. Though not considered highly prolific as a novelist, his writings have more qualitative than quantitative value.

In the introductory chapter, the research topic has been introduced and explained. To give a scientific base to the structure of analysis, the etymology of the novel 'roman' has been followed through different sub-species of the genre. Since the author Tharoor has made use of many of these styles, giving an outline of their characteristics is appropriate in examining the nature of Fiction itself. How Fiction develops from a blend of the existing types, and the history of Fiction in literature have been specified. The social / political / historical context, i.e.; the social change in which Fiction came into existence, and reasons for Fiction in writing are given. Important writers of Fiction like Truman Capote, Norman Mailer, Tom Wolfe, Dan Wakefield and Robert Kroetsch are mentioned; their works discussed and compared. Shashi Tharoor is

introduced, his personal and professional background given. The unbreakable affinity between history and literature is established, and Faction has been 'defined.' Since Faction is a word taken from 'fact' and 'fiction' and since it is seemingly a strange coinage, the scholar has resorted to explaining to the reader what Faction is, at some length.

Chapter II, "The Mythopoetics of History in *The Great Indian Novel*," has taken up the chunk of the thesis because the most important Factional work of Tharoor viz. *The Great Indian Novel* is not just a novel but a parodic version of the great epic Mahabharata. Hence, it has been given the deserving treatment in epic proportions. How *The Great Indian Novel* is a typical work of Faction is established beyond doubt.

In Chapter III, "Between Oblivion and Memory: Bricolage in *Riot*," a critical appreciation of the novel *Riot* has been attempted. The combined theme of the Babri Masjid incident in Ayodhya in India and the murder of an American girl who had gone to do good to the society in Africa as a social service, found their embryo in *Riot*. Tharoor has mixed a lot of techniques like the use of letters, diary scripts, interviews between characters, memoirs and scribblings in scrap books to bring about Faction in the novel. That an apparently simple event has been developed into not only a gripping adventure, but also a soul-stirring romance is the clarion call of Faction here.

Chapter IV, “On the Threshold of Light and Darkness: A Reading of *Show Business*,” shows the Factional aspects in the work *Show Business*, an action-packed drama on the lives of the film people in Bombay. The tinsel world and its false glamour is exposed. The real nature of the people with their peculiar character traits and inner angularities are brought out. The chapter divisions are into different monologues of the main characters. While expansion of the minimum is Faction, contraction of a vast canvas into realization of truth also can be termed Faction and the novel *Show Business* belongs to the second category. Breaking of the **illusion** that we call **reality** has been done.

“*India: From Midnight to the Millennium: The Faction of a Nation*” comes as Chapter V. According to the scholar, though *The Great Indian Novel* has a formidable outline and structure with hundreds and thousands of characters in it, *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* is the author’s Magnum Opus. The interplay as well as display of fact and fiction and their fusion are seen here. The political / social / cultural / religious India, especially of the post-Independence day has been written in a semi-humorous, semi-serious way by the author. Through this analysis, facts about Gandhi’s India and our India fuse and merge with the imaginative backup of myths, folklore, idiosyncrasies and the ethnic mores of this second thickly populated country in the world, its unities in the diversity and the diversities in the unity are explained.

In Chapter VI, “Prismatic Perceptions: An Analysis of Tharoor’s Minor Works,” the book *Five-Dollar Smile and Other Stories* has been summarized, critiqued and paralleled. The fourteen stories are very different from one another. They have beautiful and abrupt endings and are thought-provoking in their own way. Factional techniques of a varied nature have been detected in the craftsmanship. Some of the stories inspire moral values, whereas the code of ethics and the do’s and don’t’s of our society are expounded in others. *The Five-Dollar Smile* is a fictional pleasure based on the hard rock of factuality. A farce in two acts *Twenty-Two Months in the Life of a Dog* has been presented as a beautiful work of Fiction on a par, though in miniature scale, with *The Great Indian Novel*.

The work *Bookless in Baghdad* (2005) brings together pieces written over the past decade by the compulsive reader and prolific writer Tharoor, on the subject closest to his heart, reading. In these essays on books, authors, reviews, critics, literary festivals, literary aspirants, The Empire and India, Tharoor takes us on a delightful journey of discovery. He wanders the ‘book souk’ in Baghdad under sections where the middleclass are selling their volumes so that they can live; he analyses the Indianness of Salman Rushdie; discusses P. G. Wodehouse’s enduring popularity in India; and drives around Huesca, looking to pay an idiosyncratic tribute to George Orwell. There are excursions into the

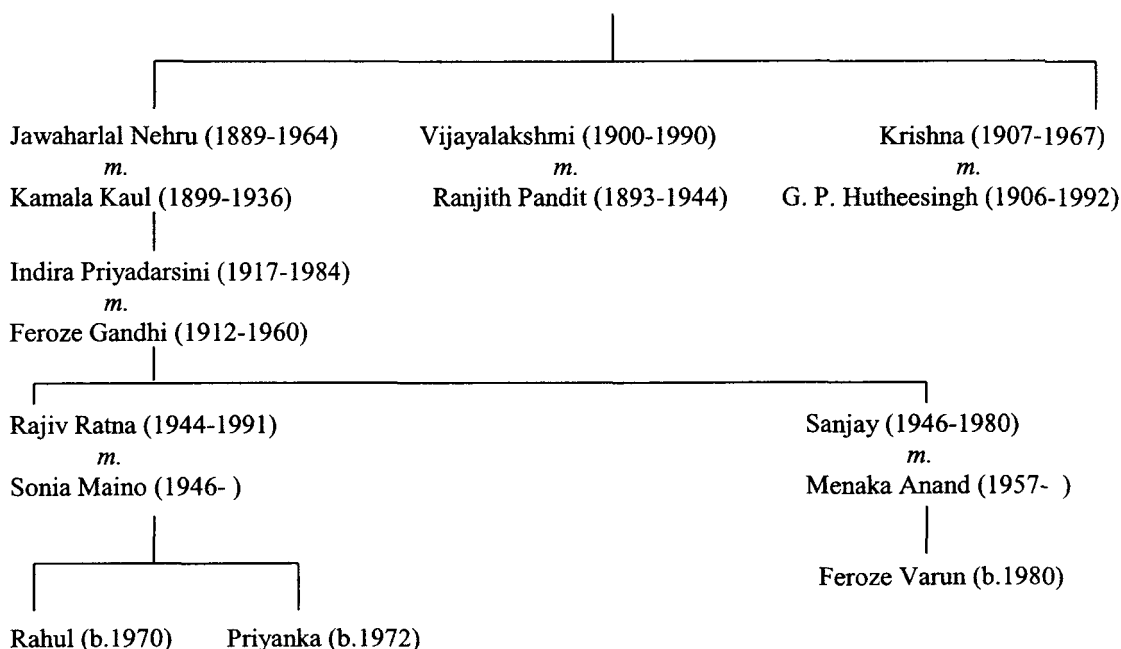
pitfalls of reviewing, explorations of the ‘anxiety of audience’ of Indian English writers, and a wicked account of how Norman Mailer dealt with a negative review. “Supremely personal, yet always probing and analytical, this brilliant collection of essays is part memoir, part literary criticism” (blurb review, *Bookless in Baghdad*). Tharoor is acclaimed as a fluid and powerful writer, one of the best in a generation of Indian authors. In the title piece, we learn what the Iraqis go through in their beleaguered land merely to go get hold of a book, and how they sell them at low prices for their livelihood. They sell **fiction** while their poverty is a hard-core **fact**. The books they sell and the circumstances under which they sell are illustrated in the work. This book also is a mixture of facts and fiction; but since it reads more as a travelogue and observations collected during travel, this work has not undergone deep analysis as a work of Fiction. It will suffice to say that *Bookless in Baghdad* deals with real incidents and attitudes given to us in high quality diction and makes good and interesting reading. It is the latest publication of the author at the juncture of submission of this thesis.

Though Tharoor has written two more books, they have not been analysed in detail because of the main reason that they do not come under the scope of our title. But their presence is acknowledged in terms of argument if not in discussion of the work.

Reasons of State (1989) is a political treatise on foreign policies and diplomatic affairs. A synopsis of the book is being given to justify the elimination. Chapter I, "The Theoretical Framework: Political Development and Foreign Policy," deals with the different types of policies and also the main political parties. Chapter II, "Mrs. Gandhi's Antecedents: The Nehru Prelude and the Shastri Interlude," delineates idealism and balance of power. Chapter III, "Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister," describes her personality, principles, prejudices and politics. Chapter IV tells about "Indira's Institutions: the Prime Minister and Foreign Policy making." Chapter V is about Indian Diplomacy in which the Ministry of External Affairs is stressed and elaborated. Chapter VI is about Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy, where the opposition in Parliament is expounded in detail. Chapter VII deals with popular pressures on Foreign Policy, Public Opinion, Interest Groups and the Press. "Political Development and National Consensus in Foreign Policy" is seen in Chapter VIII. The Epilogue that comes as Chapter IX sums up the Janata Dal Period and the Lok Dal Pause, The United States' Nuclear Non-issue, the Dependence of the Soviet Union, China which is an Initiative and Impasse, Accommodation and Amity of Pakistan and neighbours in general, trials and failures in a global way. Though this work is a laborious and well-studied observation of India's Foreign Policy and its related issues with their good and bad points, one can see nothing of fact-fiction-fusion in the treatise. Hence it has not been analysed for Faction.

Nehru: Invention of India (2003) reads more like a biography of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Unlike the unfavourable remarks Nehru gets in *The Great Indian Novel* as blind Dhritarashtra, because he was blind in two ways—blind to wisdom and blind in his love for his offspring—Jawaharlal Nehru gets a lot of attention, if not kudos, in this work for what he was. A good summing up of Nehru's triumphs and failures are given in a smooth and pleasant style. The book is a well-crafted design on the life of the Indian politicians and independence-movement heroes. It is a thoughtful account, likening Nehru to Thomas Jefferson in ways both positive and negative. A clear picture of the Nehru generation is given as a family tree. (xix).

Motilal Nehru (1861-1931) *m.* Swarup Rani Kaul (1872-1938)



In chapter I, “With Little to Comment Me: 1889-1912,” Nehru’s lineage is given. That Motilal Nehru was “A free thinking rationalist” (9) and had modern convictions, Jawahar’s “upper class distaste for the vulgar posturing of Indian politicians” (13) are asserted. His conviction was that “education does not consist of passing examinations or knowing English or Mathematics. It is a mental state” (18). Chapter II, “Greatness is Being Thrust Upon Me,” shows how Nehru “had not been saved for a life of mediocre lawyering” (23) and how the young man was “rapidly converted to the Mahatma’s zeal and commitment to action” (29). Chapter III, “To Suffer for the Dear Country,” shows Nehru’s highlights between 1921-1928. “Hope to Survive the British Empire,” the fourth chapter, tells how Nehru returns from Europe and how at forty he takes on the leadership of the party.

In Chapter V, “In Office but Not in Power,” India’s political events and conditions from 1931-1937 are described. In an emotion-charged chapter entitled “In the Name of God Go!” the strained relationship with Jinnah and the Muslim League, The Quit India Movement and the repeated jailing of the Mahatma and other freedom fighters are shown. Chapter VII, “A Tryst with Destiny,” heightens the narrative to a dramatic climax by portraying the moment of obtaining freedom. “Commanding Heights” juxtaposes Gandhiji’s sense of loss and sorrow at the event of Partition with the glorious “Bharat Ratna” being endowed on Nehru. The

years 1957-1964, dealt with in “Free Myself from this Daily Burden,” shows Jawaharlal at his finest, “passionately combining a reverence for the past with his aspiration for the future” (216). In the last chapter, “India Must Struggle against Herself,” we see a grand finale to the compliment Tharoor pays to Nehru, since he feels that in death too, as in life, Jawaharlal would become India. It may not be a glorious tribute to India’s first Prime Minister of his own unwise and adamant choice, but surely Tharoor gives him his due by highlighting his positive sides and literary abilities. In spite of all this, it is difficult to find Fiction in this work and as a result it has been sidelined.

Kerala, God’s Own Country (2002) comprises the painter M. F. Husain’s depictions of the scenic beauty of the State, supplemented by Shashi Tharoor’s descriptions and titles. In this work, Tharoor has however not fictionalized his impressions of Kerala. In their myriad perceptions and representations, Tharoor feels that Husain’s elephants embody the magic of Kerala: the exceptional natural beauty of the state, its lagoons, its forests, its beaches and above all, the greenery of the countryside, with its emerald paddy fields and banana groves, and coconut and arecanut trees swaying in the gentle breeze. But while M. F. Husain painted on canvas the beauty of the land, Tharoor has, as an accompaniment to the visual treat, painted word pictures in the book by subtitled Husain’s works very poetically. *Kerala, God’s Own Country*

does not fall under the purview of this thesis. Yet, the blending of the imaginative with the factual, the aesthetic with the rational, complements the rest of Tharoor's narrative output in the traversing of boundaries and endorsing threshold spaces.

Tharoor's attempts to fictionalize reality are ultimately an unprejudiced endeavour. In this regard, he emerges as a true practitioner of Faction. As Bhuvana Sankaranarayanan says:

The main cautionary note to writers attempting faction, the literary genre based on journalistic swoops, is that they should refrain from the intention to 'libel' or 'hurt' in the process of their interpretative exploration of the lives of the well-known, whose doings, as recorded by the media, provide readers a relief from the indolence and frenzy of their own lives. (4)

There are no jibes meant, no veiled insults in any of his lines. He adheres strictly to frank opinions and sincere suggestions. He does not hesitate to condemn what seems to him shallow, trivial or counterfeit, no matter how big a seller the object or subject in his vision may be. But his sympathies are warm and keen and his mind always responsive. He seems to illustrate Lyon William Phelps' observations on authentic literary judgement: "No person is qualified to judge the value of new books who is not well-

acquainted with the old ones, second, that the only test of the real greatness of any book is Time” (Phelps 252).

Chinua Achebe once remarked: “Man’s desire for fiction goes with his ability for making them, just as his need for language is inseparable from his capacity for speech” (Achebe 1975: 5). No one would suggest that the mute is silent because he has no need to speak. Man’s propensity for fictions and his need to create them are proportionate to each other. It is the reader’s duty here to see how much of reality has gone into the fiction. No work, no creation can be called perfect. Certain writing can be perfectly imperfect or imperfectly perfect. The perfection lies in the eyes of the beholder, in the case of writing—in the mind of the reader.

In this thesis entitled “A Study of *Faction* in the Works of Shashi Tharoor,” a sincere attempt has been made to highlight elements of *Faction*. *Faction* has been extended to mean the lines of intersection between binary oppositions—fact and fiction, appearance and reality, memory and oblivion, poetry and history, and so on. Tharoor’s fragmentary and multiple perceptions of what can be characterized as a postmodern world fall neatly into the technique of *Faction*, which narrativizes an ‘in-between’ existence. The principles of New Journalism and the Non-fiction novel were handy in this analysis, but attempt has been to transcend the focus on these journalistic movements of the 1950s to a larger and broader vision of the present-day world.

A world-famous author, who has been holding one of the most important individual diplomatic seats in the world, may have umpteen number of admirers and critics who do a lot of critiquing on his works. So an approach to his works from the angle of **Faction** may be new, and therefore, interesting. By giving form to the intellectual activity of comprehending life, both novelists and writers of factual narratives can contribute to literature, such a renewal as Tharoor has done. Whether or not these writers do so effectively, depends on the ways in which and the extents to which, they put up their imaginations at the bar of judgment, as they take the readers through the process of fact-fiction configuration. Tharoor's novels revel in multiplicity of tone and colour and their constant shifting patterns are on comedy, parody, tragedy, lament, protest, appreciation and general constructive criticism. Many of those articles could rise above racial and ideological burden and give an unbiased picture of time, then and now. The author's sensibility was shaped by the politics of the day and he has created a convincing picture of political revolt. Some of his works rise above the level of the documentary and weave artistically the pattern behind the events which illuminate the essential human conditions during a particularly important period of Indian History. Through **Faction**, the author has captured the richness and diversity of India's social, cultural and spiritual mosaic which never ceases to fill us with awe and admiration. We have to assign to him the

multiple roles of seer, teacher and chronicler. Tharoor along with Norman Mailer and Truman Capote has paved the way for contemporary as well as future writers of Fiction to follow. At the end of the critical examination one can feel the aptness in Tharoor's words, ". . . when I put my head on the pillow at night, I can think about how my work has made a difference in people's lives. It's been an amazing experience" (Tharoor, www.tufts.edu 2003).

Yet when the scholar's design in using it is fully served, it is time the pen ceases to probe further.