

THE GREAT INDIAN NOVEL: THE AUTHENTICITY AND CHARACTERIZATION

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The outstanding feature of *The Great Indian Novel* is the comparison of the mythological characters of Mahabharata with the prominent leaders of Indian Freedom Struggle. This wonderful art of characterization intermingles myth with history. This chapter analyzes the authenticity of comparison of Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi with the characters of the Maharabhata.

It is obvious that Gandhiji is the central figure in Indian Freedom Struggle. The wheel of Indian struggle for freedom revolves around the axis of Gandhiji's techniques of non-violence and *satyagrah*. The comparison of Gandhiji with Bhishma (or Gangaji) of Mahabharata is appealing and fascinating in the sense that both remain always true to their principle throughout their life. Let's first observe Shashi Tharoor's approach of mixing myth with history, which lies in the comparison of Gandhiji with Bhishma.

The character Ganga Datta (later known as Bhishma) is introduced in the third chapter of Book I. Simply speaking; *The Great Indian Novel* is the narration of Mahabharata. The narrator discloses his intention when he talks to Brahm, his old friend that he (the narrator) wants to tell past, present and future of existence and passing. The narrator seeks a friend whom he can intimate his story. Brahm gives him a person named Ganapathi. The job of Ganapathi is not less than to transcribe the song of Modern India in prose. In the second chapter of Book I the narrator introduces himself and tells that he is the bastard child of a fisherwoman Satyavati who is seduced by a traveling sage, Rishi Parashar. However Rishi Parashar convinces Saryavati's father that her virginity would not be affected. While narrating the story of Satyavati and Rishi Parashar Shashi Tharoor gives serious and mock comments on Brahmins of those days. He writes:

Primitive transport system or not, our Brahmins got about a lot in those days, and they didn't need any hotel booking then ... He would be offered his host's hospitality, his food, his bed and often. .. his daughter as well.

{*The Great Indian Novel*, 1989:19}

It is considered pride for a woman to conceive a child from a Brahmin, even without marriage. Thus, the narrator of the novel, named as Ved Vyas, is born in an old midwife's home in the forest.

Later Satyavati becomes the wife of King Santanu who already has a son named Ganga Datta. Once Santanu comes across Satyavati sitting on the riverbank and is struck by the beauty of Satyavati. As it really happens in the story of Mahabharata, Satyavati's father, the king of fishermen, puts the condition that Satyavati is allowed to marry Santanu only if the son born to his

daughter should inherit the throne. Thus, in the beginning of the novel Shashi Tharoor presents the story of the Mahabharata as it is. This is the dilemmatic situation for Santanu because he has already made Ganga Datta his successor to the throne. Seeing the depressed mood of his father Ganga Datta himself decides to go to Satyavati's father. In the description of Ganga Datta's departure to Satyavati's father, the novelist has intermingled the mythological character Ganga with historical character Gandhi. Shashi Tharoor describes, "Ganga Datta didn't travel alone either. In the later years he would be accompanied by a non-violent army of satyagrahis so that the third - class train carriage he always insisted on travelling in were filled with the elegantly sacrificing elite of his followers" (p.23).

The use of the phrase '*a non-violent army of satyagrahis*' presents the picture of Gandhiji who with the weapon of *satyagrah* fought against the British Empire.

Ganga Datta reaches Satyavati's father home and tells him that he is ready to renounce the throne. He also takes a vow of celibacy in order that there may not be any claimant to the throne. Satyavati marries Santanu and gives him two sons Chitrangada and Vichitravirya. Ganga selects three girls Amba, Ambika and Ambalika for the marriages of Chitrangada and Vichitravirya. But Amba, as she is in love with someone else, unwillingly accedes to the proposal of Ganga. Then onwards she has the attitude of revenge against Ganga Datta. Since Satyavati's sons die without producing any child, she fears the annexation of Hastinapur in the British rule. Satyavati, then remembers his holy son Ved Vyas for the preservation of the family and thus emerged Dhritarashtra from Ambika who becomes the heir to the Hastinapur throne, Pandu from Ambalika who is pale and Vidur from the servant girl.

After the critical analysis of Book I, it can be said that the character Ganga Datta has been presented in the same way as he is described in the Mahabharata. There is much description of the activities of Ganga Datta and his key role in Hastinapur. Book I does not deal much with the activities of Gandhiji.

Book II entitled '*The Duel with the Crown*' deals with some important aspects of Gandhiji's life, which has been interwoven in the character of Ganga Datta. The British Resident Sir Richard is eager to know about Ganga Datta and he is narrating to him in the following manner:

He seems to believe in the force of moral authority, sir. He cleans his own toilet to show there is nothing inherently shameful about the task, which, as you know, is normally performed by Untouchables, (p.37)

Thus in these lines the novelist has indicated Gandhiji without mentioning his name. The whole world knows that Gandhiji used to clean his own toilet. In the middle of the Book Ganga Datta has been shown as the real teacher of three sons—Dhritarashtra, Pandu, and Vidur. Ganga Datta arranges for the education of three sons and after that he starts looking for girls for their marriages. For Dhritarashtra he finds a very good girl from Allahabad. She is called Gandhari. For Pandu he selects a girl named Kunti Yadav. Devaki, a girl educated at the Loreto Convent and is fluent in English, is chosen for Vidur.

The eleventh chapter of Book II elucidates the political activities of Gandhiji. As it has been said earlier that Ved Vyas is the narrator of the novel and is narrating the story of Mahabharata to Ganpathi. While narrating the story he tells Ganpathi:

Shall I tell of strange weapon of disobedience, which Ganga with all his experience of insisting upon obedience . . . Shall I sing the praises of the mysterious ammunition of truth-force . . . under the hail of police lathis; the power of wave water wave khadi-clad men and women ...

(p.46)

These lines show Gandhiji's concept of self-empowerment. Through the weapons of truth and disobedience he advises all to self-empower themselves. Through this principle of self-empowerment Gandhiji made Indians fit for a long battle against British Imperialism. This has been shown in the novel when Gangaji takes up the issue of indigo planters in the Motihari district and wins the battle against injustice. The British Police Officer inquires Gangaji when he reaches the Motihari district. He bluntly replies that he has come to Motihari for the inquiry into the social and economic conditions of the people of Motihari. Gangaji's straightforward reply to the British Magistrate is a very good resemblance of Gandhiji's firm determination to the concept of 'truth' and 'satyagraha' which he used to fight against injustice. Gangaji retorts, "In the interest of justice and of cause I am here to serve, I refuse to obey the order to leave Motihari—a pause which he looked directly at the magistrate . . . (p.54). The magistrate tries to speak to something but no words come out. He helplessly looks at the government pleader, who is completely soaked in his own sweat. Dealing with the effect of satyagrah, Shashi Tharoor writes: "The satyagrahi comes to a district, clamorous for justice refuses an order to leave, makes his defiance public . . ." (p.54). This is the impact of satyagraha that motivated them to come out of self-imposed fear and prepared them to fight against injustice. Gandhiji himself has said satyagrah 'soul—force'. In the words of Gandhiji:

Satyagraha is a force that may be used by individuals as well as by communities. It may be used as well in political as well in domestic affairs. Its universal applicability is a demonstration of its permanence and invincibility. It can be used alike by men, women, and children.ⁱⁱⁱ

Gandhiji's views on satyagraha clearly shows the universal appeal in it which is meant for the practice in the society at the individual level or mass level. This specific feature of satyagraha which inspires self conscience against injustice and makes someone morally strong has been shown in the following lines of the novel:

Ganga took the issue of freedom to the people as one of simple right and wrong—law versus conscience. By abstaining from violence he wrested the moral advantage. By breaking the law non-violently he showed up the injustice of the law. (p-55)

The third book has little description of Gandhiji and his activities. In the beginning of Book IV the narrator describes a very pathetic event of Indian Freedom Struggle to Ganapathi. The Bibigarh Garden massacre described in the beginning of Book IV has the resemblance of Jalianwalla Bagh massacre that occurred on 13 April 1919. There comes the news of annexation of Hastinapur by the British rule and against which Gangaji is going to address people in the Bibigarh Garden. Approximately ten thousand people, men, women, even some children gathered in the garden. Colonel Rudyard (historically represents General Dwyer) enters the garden with his troops and asks his men to level their rifles at the crowd hardly 150 yards away and fire. The soldiers fire around 1600 bullets. General Rudyard expresses satisfaction with his men and says, "Only 84 bullets wasted, he said. 'Not bad' (p-81). Gangaji comes late, at the appointed hour of his address and thus is saved in the massacre. Gangaji is stunned to see the brutality of Britishers and utters the words, "*Vinashakate, viparita buddhi*", which means 'whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad.' This is a very interesting comparison of Jallianwala Bagh massacre with Bibigarh Garden massacre, which sets forth the atrocities of British rule.

Thereafter Book V elucidates Gangaji's activities at Calcutta. After the issue of indigo

planters at Motihari Gangaji is shown helping suburban jute-factory workers at Budge Budge, outside Calcutta. Jute is perhaps India's greatest contribution to the prosperity of Scotland. It is grown in the swamps of East Bengal. When Gangaji arrives in Budge Budge he finds a desperate situation. The locked-out workers are, of course, being paid nothing. Their families are starving. In order to solve the problem the mill-owners announce that they are closing the lockout. The factory gates are open to anyone who is ready to accept 20 per cent bonuses. But Gangaji responds that if the owner's lock-out is over, the workers strike has begun. He declares that they would return to their machines until 35 per cent bonuses have been granted. After an unsatisfactory response from the mill owners Gangaji declares, "I shall not eat or drink, or travel by any vehicle, until the workers* just demands have been met." (p.100). Lastly a message goes to the Mill Owners' Association of Budge Budge from the Governor of Bengal: *'Give in'* This is the second battle that Gangaji wins against injustice. The description of the event clearly presents the power of 'fast' and 'truth', which Gandhiji used in the Freedom Struggle to fight against imperialism. Gandhiji's principle of truth and fast was not only for himself. His dream was to use the weapon of truth and non-violence by the entire nation. Gandhiji asserts:

We have to make truth and non-violence not matters for mere individual practice but for practice by groups and communities and nations. That at any rate is my dream. I shall live and die in trying to realize it. My faith helps me to discover new truths every day. ^{iv}

Gandhiji's fast had a very great appeal to the Indian people and even to the British rulers. In fasting, in directing the strength of one's convictions against oneself, Gandhiji teaches us to resist injustice with arms that no one can take away from us. Gandhiji's use of the fast makes our weakness a weapon. This has been depicted in the character of Gangaji when he keeps fast for the justice of mill workers. The following line shows the impact of Gandhiji's fast on Indian people, "It captured the imagination of India in a way that no speech, no prayer bomb had ever done" (p. 105). Dealing with the impact of fast on Indian people Shashi Tharoor narrates that hungry students pushed their plates away knowing the Great Teacher was not eating; entire villages refused to touch a flame to their wicks in order to share the darkness with him. Thus Book V chiefly highlights Gandhiji's practice of fast as a weapon to fight against injustice.

Book VI has the resemblance of The Civil Disobedience Movement, which was started on 12 March 1930 with the famous Dandi March. Gandhiji broke the salt law by making salt from the seawater Dandi, a village in Gujarat sea-coast. This famous historical incident in Indian Freedom Struggle has been presented in the novel in the description of mango march, launched by Gangaji against the tax imposed on mango by British rule. It is obvious that the mango is the king of fruits. But colonial regime considered it as a cash crop and accordingly, a tax is to be levied on the fruit, calculated on the bases of each tree's approximate annual yield. District officials are instructed to conduct a mango-tree registration campaign to ensure that the tax records were brought up to date. Gangaji decides to embark upon a satyagraha to resist the unjust mango tax. He decides to break the law personally by violating the terms of the Mango Act. Gangaji appoints Dhritarashtra as the successor in the violation of mango tax and says that he is blind, but he sees far. Thus, the great Mango March begins with 78 volunteers gathered all over the country. However, mangos can be found anywhere and Gangaji could have gone to the nearest garden to pluck the mango in order to break the law. But he travels 288 miles away from the ashram in order to inflate the issue to one of national importance by keeping it in the news for as long as possible. The march continues for twenty-four days and Gangaji plucking the mango breaks the law. As it is expected, Gangaji is arrested. But the nation wide agitation takes

place. However, Gangaji suspends the mango agitation after an incident of violence at Chaurasta where agitated mob set the police thana on fire resulted as the death of some policemen. Gangaji says: The principle of nonviolence is more important than any single agitation." (p. 105). Shashi Tharoor has beautifully narrated the ideals of Gandhiji's non-violence in the description of Mango agitation. Gangaji's suspension of Mango agitation after the violence at Chaurasta resembles the incident of violence at Chauri Chaura after which Gandhiji had suspended the Civil Disobedience Movement. Gandhiji himself has said, "Ahinsa is the attribute of the soul, and, therefore, to be practiced by everybody in all affairs of life. If it cannot be practiced in all departments, it has no practical value." While dealing with Gandhiji's principle of truth and non-violence Shashi Tharoor has also made an attempt to focus on the relationship of Gandhi and Nehru. As it is believed by many historians that Gandhiji had soft corner towards Nehru. Gandhiji played a major role in making a suitable position for Nehru in Indian Freedom Struggle and also after independence. But Gandhiji was shocked when Nehru and other Congress leaders accepted the proposal of partition of the country. Shashi Tharoor has narrated all these historical events in the eleventh book of the novel. When Gangaji hears the news of partition he says to Dhritarashtra, "If you agree to break the country, you will break my heart" (p.223). At this Dhritarashtra replies, 'It will break many hearts', Gangaji, 'his chosen heir said sadly. Mine and all ours included. But we have no choice" (p. 223). The use of words "his chosen heir" clearly indicates that Gandhiji wanted to see Nehru as the leader of independent India. But the news of partition was painful to him. Shashi Tharoor further narrates. "It was first time we had ever gone against the expressed wishes of Gangaji. His era was over" (p.223). The story of Gangaji, which started from the second book of the novel, comes to end in the eleventh book when Amba reappears in the scene with a new name Shikhandin. Amba calls Gangaji an impotent, an infertile old fool and says that the tragedy of the country springs from him. She then takes out a gun and fires three bullets in quick succession

This whole discussion leads to the conclusion that the comparison of Gangaji of Mahabharata and Gandhiji is relevant and appealing in the sense that both remained always true to their ideals throughout the life. In Mahabharata Ganga 2Datta always stuck to the oath of celibacy. Even for the preservation of the family he refuses the proposal of Satyawati to produce child from the widows of Vichitravirya. Gangaji replies to Satyawati: "But I can't, Mother, said Ganga piously. 'A vow is a vow'. I'd rather give up my position, this kingdom, the world itself than break my promise" (p.30). Gandhiji, too, always remained firm to the principle of truth and non-violence. He calls off Non-Cooperation Movement after the incidence of violence at Chauri Chaura. Gandhiji tried to rid the world from violence and establish the rule of righteousness (dharma). His avowed aim in hfe was to attain salvation but as a believer of Gita, he sought it through a life of action (karma) rather than through meditation in seclusion. Gandhiji made deep study of the Gita and accepted the Gita as his spiritual guide. It was from the Gita that he derived the ideas of 'non-possession', 'service without self and 'action without attachment'. Gandhiji himself has said:

The Gita has been a mother to me ever since I became first acquainted with it in 1889. I turn to it for guidance in every difficulty, and the desired guidance has always been forthcoming...^{vi}

If we analyze both great personalities Gangaji (Bhishma) and Gandhiji, in the role of kingmaker, the comparison appears relevant. Gangaji never made claim to the throne of Hastinapur. Gandhiji could have become the Prime Minister of independent India, but he never wished the same. He considered himself a politician who was trying to become a saint. Thus, it

can be said that Shashi Tharoor has successfully intermingled myth with history by comparing the mythological character Gangaji with historical character Gandhiji. In this comparison Shashi Tharoor has also made an attempt to show how by the end of 1975 people forget the ideals of Gandhiji and how Gandhiji's vision of India had been shattered by the people. This fact is represented in the second book of the novel when some students of Delhi Public School in a quiz competition, responded to the question 'Who is Gandhiji' in the following way:

Gangaji is important because he was the father of our Prime Minister,
'wrote one ten-year boy with a greater sense of relevance than accuracy.
'Gangaji was an old saint who lived many years ago and looked after
cows', suggested another .. (p.47).

It is true that today people refer to Gandhiji, there are many statues of Gandhiji all over the country, but Gandhiji's ideals find no place in our practice.

After the comparison of Bhishma and Gandhiji the next interesting comparison in *The Great Indian Novel* is between Dhritarashtra and Jawaharlal Nehru. It is to note that these comparisons are at figurative level. In the comparison of Bhishma and Gandhiji we see that both always remain true to their ideals and principle. At the surface level the comparison of Dhritarashtra and Nehru seems odd because Dhritarashtra has some kind of negative role in the Mahabharata whereas Nehru is considered as the architect of modern India. Dhritarashtra had bias against the sons of Pandu and he often took the side of his own son Duryodhana. Dhritarashtra was blind and thus was not able to see what was happening around him. He always ignored the misdeeds and highhandedness of his son Duryodhana. This is the main focus of Shashi Tharoor's comparison of Dhritarashtra and Nehru. Shashi Tharoor has made an attempt to show Dhritarashtra's blindness in terms of Nehru's blindness towards Indira Gandhi as Indira dismissed *first* elected communist government in Kerla in 1959 and Nehru recommended that. Let's first analyse Shashi Tharoor's approach of comparing myth with history in terms of Dhritarashtra and Nehru.

The character Dhritarashtra is introduced in the last chapter of Book 1 in the novel. After the death of Vichitravirya, Satyawati remembers her holy son Ved Vyas for the preservation of the family because Bhishma has taken the oath of celibacy. Thus with the help of Ved Vyas there emerged Dhritarashtra from Ambika, Pandu from Ambalika and Vidur from the servant girl. Shashi Tharoor himself has described the character of Dhritarashtra in Book II in the following manner:

Dhritarashtra was a fine-looking young fellow, slim, of aquiline nose and aristocratic bearing. . . As a child he found education in India a harrowing experience, which was, no doubt, why he was due course sent to Eton. The British public School system the man.. (p. 41)

Shashi Tharoor further narrates. "He quickly acquired two dozen suits, different pair of shoes for each day of the week . . . with these assets he was admitted to King's College, Cambridge" (p.41). Thus, without mentioning the name of Nehru, Shashi Tharoor indirectly refers to him. At surface level it appears a funny description that Dhritarashtra was admitted to King's College, Cambridge. The deep analysis of these lines refers to the description of Nehru's childhood. Jawaharlal Nehru was born in Allahabad on 14 November 1889. When he was ten years old his family shifted to a new and bigger house that his father named 'Anand Bhavan'. Only at the age of thirteen Nehru became the member of Mrs. Annie Besant's Theosophical Society. In May 1905, when he was fifteen, Jawaharlal set sail for England, with father, mother and baby sister. At Harrow, though not lonely and homesick for long, he had a feeling he was not

one of the English boys and they must have felt the same about him. Dr. Wood, the Headmaster of Harrow was fully satisfied with him. Later Nehru joined Trinity College, Cambridge, at the beginning of October 1907 when he was approaching eighteen. He gained a wider view of world at Cambridge. Thus, Shashi Tharoor's description of Dhritarashtra's education at King's College, Cambridge resembles Nehru's education at Trinity College, Cambridge. The narrator of the novel Ved Vyas narrates the personality of Dhritarashtra in the following manner to Ganapathi, . . . "he devoted himself to developing another kind of vision and became, successively a formidable debater, a Bachelor of Arts and a Fabian Socialist" (p. 41).

These lines indirectly seem to refer to variety of knowledge which Nehru got at Harrow and Cambridge. In his autobiography Nehru himself has written:

Three years I was at Cambridge, three quiet years with little disturbance in them, moving slowly on like the sluggish Cambridge. They were pleasant years, with many friends and some work and some play and a gradual widening of the intellectual horizon.^{vii}

Gangaji chooses Gandhari for the marriage of Dhritarashtra as he says in the second Book:

For you, Dhritarashtra, the eldest, I have found a girl from a good family of Allahabad. She is called Gandhari, and I am told she has lustrous black eyes. Not, 'he added hastily, 'that matters, of course, No, the main attraction of this lovely lady, from our point of view, is that she hails from a most productive line, (p.43)

These lines indirectly show Jawaharlal marriage with Kamala Kaul in 1916 in the city of Delhi. The marriage took place on Vasanta Panchami day, which marks the coming of spring. The phrase "She hails from a most productive line" indicates Kamala's talent and her productive role in Nehru's life. Kamala was shy and tender and Jawaharlal liked to tell her what he knew of the world and of the spirit of freedom which swept the country. Kamala soon showed that she was brave woman of strong will. She joined Jawaharlal and the family in the freedom struggle. She also went to prison and shared suffering several times. Whenever she was outside, she organized volunteers and led protests. Thus, Book I and Book II of the novel primarily highlights Jawaharlal's childhood, his education at Cambridge and his marriage with Kamala Kaul.

The intermingling of myth with history in *The Great Indian Novel* has affected the real story of Mahabharata. In the Mahabharata Gandhari gave birth to hundred sons among whom Duryodhana was the eldest. But in the novel Shashi Tharoor has slightly altered the story of Mahabharata. In the novel instead of hundred sons Gandhari gave birth to one daughter. Gandhari's head was sunk into the pillow because she had failed to create the son her husband needed. She refused to see even her own infant. Surprisingly, Gandhari asked Ved Vyas, the narrator of the novel how it happened. At this Ved Vyas replied that her one daughter would be equal to a thousand sons. However, Gandhari didnot believe Ved Vyas. Later Ved Vyas narrates to Ganapathi, "I knew she did not believe me. Gandhari would no live to know it but her somber-eyed daughter, Priya Duryodhani, would grow up one day to rule all India" (p.74). This is a very good example of mining myth with history by the novelist. The birth of Dhritarashtra's daughter reflects the birth of Jawaharlal and Kamala's daughter Indira Priyadarshini on 19 November 1917.

Book VI which deals with Gandhiji's Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 highlights the beginning of Nehru's political activities. It also focuses on Nehru's relationship with Gandhiji. The narrator of the novel Ved Vyas narrates to Ganapathi:

Dhritarashtra, for one as you know, Ganapathi, had acquired in England traces of the right accent along with streaks of the wrong ideas. He had returned fired with Fabianism, which taught that equality and justice were everybody's right. (p. 110)

The narrator of the novel further narrates, "Dhritarashtra found himself drawing the corollary that the Indian government could only fulfill its duty if it were a government of India run by Indians for the welfare of Indians" (p.11). These two passages show Nehru's vision of free India where everyone has got equal opportunity. Jawaharlal Nehru firmly believed that the concept of equal opportunity to all is not possible in British rule. These ideas paved the way for him to enter Indian Freedom struggle. Jawaharlal Nehru himself has quoted in his autobiography:

I was paying a little more attention to the peasant problem since Gandhiji's agrarian movements in Champaran (Bihar) and Kaira (Gujarat). But my mind was full of political developments in 1920 and of the coming non-cooperation which was looming on the horizon.

Gandhiji recognized the leadership quality of Jawaharlal and declared Jawaharlal as his legal heir. Shashi Tharoor has narrated this important event in an interesting manner. Gangaji launches an agitation against the government's decision to impose tax on mango. While addressing a mass he tells people:

I myself am of little importance ... I am certain to be arrested ... But do not assume that I after I am gone there will be no one left to guide you. It is not I, but Dhritarashtra who is your guide. He is blind, but he sees far. He has the capacity to lead. (p. 121).

Before this Shashi Tharoor narrates, "The Kauravas were left in no doubt that Dhritarashtra was Gangaji's man" (p.11). It is clear that Gandhiji promoted Nehru as the national leader despite having some disagreement regarding nonviolence. M. Chalapathi Rau has also mentioned the same view about Nehru in his book *Builders of Modern India*:

There were many uncertainties, and Gandhi was asked the question how, as he had declared Jawaharlal as legal heir, he liked the idea of a legal heir advocating guerilla warfare against the Japanese. What would happen to his ahinsa, when Jawaharlal advocated violence? Gandhi replied that twenty-two years of preaching and practice of nonviolence, however impacted it had been, would not be suddenly wiped out by the mere wish of Jawaharlal and Rajagopalachari.

After a long struggle India got her independence on 15 August 1947 and Nehru became the first Prime Minister. Shashi Tharoor describes this event in the following manner; "The India of which Dhritarashtra assumed the leadership on 15 August 1947 had just been through a cathartic process of regeneration, another stage in this endless cycle" (p.245).

The first and most important issue before Nehru was the status of princely states. Through the efforts of Sardar Patel and Nehru by 15 August 1947 all the 562 states except Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagadh had been incorporated in the Indian Union. With little difficulty Hyderabad and Junagarh were also incorporated. But Kashmir was to give trouble, which has not yet ended. The twelfth Book of the novel chiefly deals with Kashmir problem and Nehru's viewpoint regarding Kashmir problem. Shashi Tharoor describes that Manimir (Kashmir) had been linked politically to the rest of India since the sixth century AD. The king of Manimir Vyabhichar Singh (Maharaja Hari Singh) declared himself to be independent. At this Dhritarashtra remarks, "He is being a damned fool," Dhritarashtra said, what's worse of course, is

that for years we have supported the Manimir National Congress of Sheikh Azharuddin against Mr. Z's undemocratic rule .. ." (p.247)

The description of Manimir in the novel reflects Kashmir state. Kashmir had been sold by East Indian Company to Gulab Singh, the great grandfather of the then ruler, Hari Singh. The Muslim majority was ruled by a Hindu Maharaja, and the state subjects who were predominantly Muslims were led by Sheikh Abdullah, the leader of the Muslim National Conference. Later its name was changed to the Kashmir National Conference and Hindus also took part in it. Thus Manimir National Congress historically represents Kashmir National Conference. The abovementioned passage shows Jawaharlal's closeness to Sheikh Abdullah. In June 1946, when the Cabinet Mission was carrying on talks with political leaders, Jawaharlal rushed to Kashmir to assist in the defence of Sheikh Abdullah, then on trial for treason. Jawaharlal was prohibited the entry by Maharaja. He broke the ban and was kept under detention. Later he was released at the Viceroy's intervention. Pakistan's invasion on Kashmir has been presented in the middle of the twelfth Book when Vidur informs Dhritarashtra, "Manimir has been invaded from Karnistan" (p.250). Vidur is sent to Manimir to talk to Maharaja and he says to Maharaja:

We have information that a large band of Pathan irregulars has streamed across your borders, 'Vidur replied . . . And that they are almost certainly armed, supplied and directed by the government of Mohammad Ali Kama, which intends to anew Manimir. (p.255).

The Maharaja of Kashmir behaved in a strange way on the eve of Independence and after and was to make Kashmir a permanent problem. His intention was to rule Kashmir independently. But towards the end of 1947, armed raiders from the Rawalpindi side infiltrated into the state and began advancing, spreading destruction along the way, with rapine, loot and arson. Srinagar was under threat and the Maharaja realized the danger, packed up, and went to Jammu, and sought India's help. India was ready to give military help but after the proper and official Accession of Kashmir to Indian Union. Shashi Tharoor has criticized Maharaja's role on Kashmir issue who wanted Indian troops to go back after fighting against invaders. Shashi Tharoor narrates:

'No!' The Maharaja cried . . . No. No Accession. Never! Yes. Ah. Why? Yes. Can't you send? Ah. Indian troops? Ah. Yes! Friendly basis? Why accession? Not! Yes! Yes! . . . The words were emerging in little grunts. 'Send me. Troops. Aah. Save my state. Aah. Then go away ... No accession ... Understand' (p.256).

However after dramatic developments Maharaja signed the Instrument of Accession and Indian troops were flown to the Srinagar valley. It was a hair's breadth escape for the Maharaja and the state. The National Conference, under Sheikh Abdullah's leadership, played a valiant part in organizing supplies, raising a militia, and rousing the people's will for resistance. The Indian Government, with their faith in the United Nations, decided to place a complaint before the Security Council about Pakistan's aggression. Nehru's decision to take Kashmir issue to the United Nations was severely criticized. Ved Vyas, the narrator of the novel narrates, "My blind and visionary son had decided to appeal to the U.N. Many of us who never forgave him for that decision found all sorts of indefensible impulses behind it (p.260). Indian troops could have easily rooted out Pakistani forces but Nehru's decision stopped them. M. Chalapathi Rau mentions the same view in his book entitled *Builders of Modern India: Jawaharlal Nehru*:

Jawaharlal has been blamed for referring the Kashmir question to the Security Council, when it seemed it could be settled by the Indian forces driving out Pakistani forces and they were in a position to do so.

Shashi Tharoor has also focused on Nehru's relationship with Krishna Menon, the then Principal Secretary, who later becomes the Defence Minister. Shashi Tharoor sets forth Nehru's too much faith in Menon. This is Nehru's blindness towards Menon and bureaucracy. In the article on Nehru entitled 'The Nehru Era' Partha Chatterjee has quoted the same view:

It is true that the civil servants became increasingly powerful, despite Nehru. Nehru realized and regretted this; but he also recognized that there seemed little he could do about it...^{ix}

Shashi Tharoor narrates Nehru's blind faith on Menon in the follow way, "Dhritarashtra, meanwhile was so content with the company of his popular and successful Defence Minister that he had no desire to listen to the warnings that few of us who cared to, dared to give him" (p.302).

The next important aspect of Nehru's policy, pointed out by Shashi Tharoor is the principle of 'non-alignment'. Shashi Tharoor narrates:

Dhritarashtra and Kanika evolved and elaborated the concept of 'non-alignment'. In their articulate exegeses this emerged as a lofty refusal to take sides in an immoral and destructive competition that could enflame the world (p.295).

It is obvious that it was Nehru who gave a shape to the idea of non-alignment. The immediate context for emergence of this movement was the division of the world into two hostile blocs after World War II, one led by the United States and the western powers and the other by the Soviet Union. Nehru's understanding was that newly independent, poor countries of Asia and Africa had nothing to gain and everything to lose by falling for the temptation of military blocs of the big powers. Their needs were to fight poverty, illiteracy, disease etc, and these could not be met by joining military blocs. Nehru's concept of non-alignment came to symbolize the struggle of India and other newly independent nations to retain and strengthen their independence from colonialism and imperialism.

Nehru's efforts of peace suffered a jolt when China invaded India in 1962. The fourteenth book of the novel deals with China's attack on India which questioned Nehru's efforts of peace. Shashi Tharoor describes

... there were frowns on the anti-colonialist faces of the mandarins of the world's most populous tyranny, the people's Republic of Chakra . . .
During the early phase of international ostracism endured by the People's Republic. India was seen frequently by Chakra's side ...
(p.300).

It is to note that India adopted a policy of friendship towards China from the very beginning. The Congress had been sympathetic to China's struggle for imperialism. India was first to recognize the New People's Republic of China on 1 January 1950. Nehru pressed for representation for Communist China in the U.N. Security Council. In 1950, when China occupied Tibet, India was unhappy that it had not been taken into confidence, but did not question China's right over Tibet. In 1959, there occurred a big revolt in Tibet and the Dalai Lama fled Tibet along with thousands of refugees. He was given asylum in India. Nevertheless, the Chinese were unhappy. Soon, after in October 1959, Chinese opened fire on an Indian patrol near the Kongka Pass in Ladakh, killing five Indian policemen. Letters were exchanged between the two governments, but a common ground did not emerge. On 8 September 1962, Chinese forces attacked the Thagala ridge and dislodged Indian troops. A week later, the Chinese army launched a massive attack on Indian posts in the eastern sector in NEFA or what was later Arunachal Pradesh. The Indian army commander in NEFA fled without any effort at resistance

leaving the door wide open for China to walk in. There was great out city in the country and a feeling of panic about Chinese intentions. Nehru wrote two letters to President Kenedy and also sought Britain's assistance. Twenty-four hours later, the Chinese declared a unilateral withdrawal, leaving behind a heart-broken friend. Shashi Tharoor has interestingly presented all these events and has even quoted the famous slogan: '*Hindi Chini bhai-bhaf*'. The novelist writes, "... a new slogan, with official encouragement was, "Hindi- Chakar bhai-bhai" (p.300).

India took a long time to recover from the blow to its self-respect. Nehru had to face attacks from political opponents who would never have dared otherwise. He was forced to sacrifice Krishna Menon, his long-time associate and then Defence Minister. The policy of non-alignment, which he had nurtured, suffered a blow from a friend. The irony was that it was derailed by a socialist country not by a capitalist power. The Congress lost three parliamentary by-elections in a row and Nehru faced in August 1963 the first no confidence motion of his life. Nehru was criticized as a naive fool who was blinded by sentiment and failed to guard Indian interests in the face of an inevitable Communist betrayal. China's betrayal was a major blow to Nehru's life which led him to death. Bipin Chandra quotes in *India After Independence*, "Nehru never really recovered from the below and his death in May 1964 was likely hastened by it".^{xii} Shashi Tharoor describes this event in the following way:

... the Dhritarashtra of the original international initiatives and the high priest of proud non-alignment, would never be the same again ... His decline was gradual but decisive ... He did not last long after that ... (p.305).

Thus it can be said that the focus of comparison between Nehru and Dhritarashtra is to bring to light Nehru's blindness towards Indira Gandhi's highhandedness. Dhritarashtra's blindness metaphorically represents Nehru's ignorance of rural areas and a desire for Western type of administration and his too much faith in Krishna Menon. Nehru is considered to be the representative of the elite section of the society as he had got education at Trinity College, Cambridge. His ignorance of rural areas enhanced his differences with Jayaprakash Narayan and Ram Manohar Lohiya who always preferred to devote themselves to 'constructive work' in the countryside for the upliftment of the rural people. Commenting on Nehru's dominant personality, Shastri Tharoor writes, "Dhritarashtra had been like the immense banyan tree under whose shadow no other plant could grow" (p.310). It is true that many leaders like Sardar Patel fought for the freedom, but Jawaharlal Nehru became the Prime Minister of the country because of his towering and dominant personality and also because he was the choice of top-class businessmen, Gandhiji and even of British Administration.

In the last discussion we have analyzed Shashi Tharoor's approach to comparing Gandhiji with Bhishma and Jawaharlal Nehru with Dhirtarashtra. The next interesting comparison, which Shashi Tharoor has made, is between Duryodhana and Indira Gandhi. At the surface level this comparison appears odd because Duryodhana in the Mahabharata has been considered as the representative of 'adharm'. On the contrary Indira Gandhi has been considered one of the builders of modern India following the tradition of Jawaharlal Nehru. The main focus of Shashi Tharoor's approach in this comparison is to set forth Indira Gandhi's arrogance and highhandedness which several times hurt the basic structure of democracy as she proclaimed Internal Emergency on 26 June 1975.

As it is clear *The Great Indian Novel* is the simple narration of the story of the Mahabharata. The last chapter of Book El of the novel deals with the description of birth of Dhritarashtra son. In the original story of the Mahabharata Gandhari gives birth to hundred sons

among whom Duryodhana was the eldest. However, in the novel Gandhari gives birth to one daughter instead of hundred sons and about whom Ved Vyas, the narrator of the novel proclaims that she would be equal to hundred sons. The girl is named as Priya Duryodhani. Even at the time of her birth the narrator of novel predicts, . . . "Priya Duryodhani, would grow up one day to rule all India" (p.74).

The actual description of Indira Gandhi starts from the fifteenth Book. Indira Gandhi was born in a family which always affected Indian politics. In the thirteen Book of the novel Shashi Tharoor has discussed how Indira learnt to ride a country in the company of Nehru. In the first chapter of Book XIII, Kanika gives some suggestions to Dhritarashtra about ruling a country. He says:

It's never that easy to be a king
And rule a popular
For popularity's a fickle thing
which might easily gobble us.
A king must always make it clear
That in his realm he's boss
Nobody else, though near and dear,
May inflict on him a loss.
A King must always show his might
Even 'gainst kith and kin ...
(p.271)

Shashi Tharoor further writes, "Dhritarashtra might forget Kanika's advice, but Priya Duryodhani would remember every word of the acerbic High Commissioner's brutal counsel. And she would not hesitate to act on it" (p.273). These lines indicate Indira Gandhi's understanding of politics and art of diplomacy. This became visible when she defeated Morarji Desai in a contest for the leadership after the death of Lai Bahadur Shastri. Lai Bahadur Shastri's death on 10 January 1966 brought the issue of succession to the fore. The succession occurred under the direction of a group of Congress leaders who came to be collectively known as Syndicate. The group, formed in 1963, consisted K. Kamaraj, the Congress President, and regional party bosses, Atulya Ghosh of Bengal, S.K. Patil of Bombay, N. Sanjeeva Reddy of Andhra Pradesh, and S. Nijalingappa of Mysore (Karnataka). Kamaraj and Syndicate did not want Morarji Desai to win and they looked around for a candidate who could defeat Desai but remain under their shadow. Their choice fell on Indira Gandhi: She was Nehru's daughter and had all-India appeal and a progressive image. They also thought that Indira Gandhi, being inexperienced and a young woman and lacking substantial roots in the party, would be more pliable and malleable. A secret ballot in the Congress parliamentary party was held on 19 January 1966, and Indira Gandhi defeated Desai by 355 votes to 169. She was sworn in as the Prime Minister on 24 June 1966. Shashi Tharoor writes, "Priya Duryodhani was sworn in as the third Prime Minister of independent India" (p.318). However, in the beginning Indira Gandhi had to face troublesome situation. The Congress party had been declining, becoming dysfunctional since Nehru's time. It was increasingly ridden with groupism and factional rivalries at every level. Mrs. Gandhi's own position in the party had remained weak and insecure. On becoming the Prime Minister, She had not been able to form a cabinet of her choice, having had to leave all important portfolios—Home, Defence Finance, External Affairs, and Food. Kamaraj, the party President and the Syndicate tried to restrict her freedom of action in framing and implementing politics. Referring to the fourth general elections which was held in February 1967 Shashi

Tharoor writes, "If we had stronger leadership, 'said Yudhishtir bluntly at the post election meeting of the Kaurava working committee', this would not have happened" (p.339). The fourth general elections results were dramatic and Congress suffered a serious setback. Though it succeeded in retaining control of the Lok Sabha—it won 284 out of 520 seats—its majority was drastically reduced from 228 in 1962 to 48. Congress also lost its majority in the assemblies of eight states—Bihar, U.P., Rajasthan, Punjab, West Bengal, Orissa. Madras and Kerala. But the election results did not affect the popularity of Indira Gandhi. She started making her position strong in the party. Shashi Tharoor writes, "Determination had always been Priya Duryodhani's greatest asset. .. She allowed no one to acquire enough power or influence over her to be able to hurt her one day" (p.342).

The fact that Indira Gandhi allowed no one to acquire enough power in her surrounding became visible when she started ignoring and cut down the size of Morarji Desai who was appointed as the Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister in her cabinet. Having had to accept Desai as Deputy Prime Minister, Indira displayed her strength and independence in the composition of the cabinet that took office on 14 March 1967. Inder Malhotra quotes in his political biography on Indira Gandhi, "Indira and her supporters saw Desai as the Syndicate's 'Trojan Horse, while he and his friends resented Indira's distrust of him.'" ^{xiii} Shashi Tharoor narrates the desperate situation of Morarji Desai in the following way, "I'm Deputy Prime Minister but I know less about what's going on than my own Chaprasi. Hardly any files reach me and my annotations on the ones that do are never acted upon." (p.343). Almost the same view has been expressed by Inder Malhotra in his biography on Indira Gandhi:

Appalled at having been treated as a Chaprasi, an office peon. Desai accused Indira of discourtesy, rejected her request for him to stay on as Deputy Prime Minister without portfolio and resigned. ^{xiv}

In Book XVI of the novel Shashi Tharoor has commented on the economic policy of Indira Gandhi. Indira Gandhi circulated a note on economic policy to the members of AICC at its meeting held at Bangalore and announced the nationalization of financial institutions. In Book XVI Ved Vyas, the narrator of the novel narrates to Ganapathi:

Today we all realize what some of us realized even then, that nationalization only means transferring functioning and successful institutions from the hands of competent capitalists to those of bumbling bureaucrats . . . Today we know that the good nationalized banks are just as wary of unsecured loans as anyone else ...(p.346).

These lines show how Indira Gandhi successfully played the 'politics of populism' by nationalization of banks and the slogan "*garibi hatao*" (alleviate poverty). Indira Gandhi's argument that after nationalization of banks would go to rural areas and would give loans to poor people never completely implemented in a true sense.

The sixteenth Book of *The Great Indian Novel* deals with an important event of Indian politics. Shashi Tharoor refers to the split in Congress party in 1969 and Indira Gandhi's full control over Congress party. The split in Congress in 1969 was the outcome of multiplicity of factors. Although Indira Gandhi had acquired a central control over the government after the blow suffered by the Syndicate in 1967 elections but she had hardly any organizational base in the party. Moreover, the Syndicate members joined Morarji Desai, their old foe. On Kamaraj's retirement as party President at the end of 1967, they foiled Indira Gandhi's attempt to have a friendly person elected to succeed him. Instead the post went to the conservative Nijalingappa, an original member of the Syndicate. During 1968-69, the Syndicate members began actively to

plot to dislodge Indira Gandhi from the office of the Prime Minister. On 12 March 1969, Nijalingappa wrote in his diary:

I am not sure if she (Mrs. Gandhi) deserves to continue, as P.M. possibly soon there may be a show down. And on 25 April he wrote that Desai 'discussed the necessity of the P.M. being removed.'

It was the death of President Zakir Husain in May 1969 that precipitated the events leading to the long-awaited split in Congress. The Syndicate was determined to have their own man occupy the President's office. In the party conclave at Bangalore from 11 to 13 July, the Syndicate despite Indira's opposition, nominated Sanjiva Reddy, a prominent leader of the Syndicate, as the Congress candidate for presidentship. But Indira Gandhi started playing her cards well. Reddy was opposed by the senior statesman C. D. Deshmukh, as the candidate of Swatantra and Jan Sangh, and V.V. Giri, who had decided to stand as an independent, supported by the two communist parties, SSP, DMK, Muslim League and a section of Akali Dal. Indira Gandhi wanted to support V.V. Giri, but did not know how she could go against her party's candidate whose nomination papers she had filed. Indira Gandhi got a chance when to assure Reddy's election Nijalingappa met the leaders of Jan Sangh and Swatantra. Indira Gandhi immediately accused the Syndicate of having struck a secret deal with communal and reactionary forces in order to oust her from power. She now, more or less openly, supported Giri by refusing to issue a party whip in favour of Reddy and by asking Congress MPs and MLAs to vote freely according to their 'conscience'. In the election, nearly one-third of them defied organizational leadership and voted for V.V. Giri, who was declared elected by a narrow margin on 20 August. Dealing with this event and highlighting Indira Gandhi's diplomacy Shashi Tharoor writes, "The Prime Minister then called for a 'conscience vote' in the presidential election" (p.350). In the end, on 12 November, the defeated and humiliated Syndicate took disciplinary action against Indira Gandhi and expelled her from the party for having violated party discipline. The party had finally split with Indira Gandhi setting up a rival organization, which came to be known as Congress (R)—R for Requisitionists. The Syndicate dominated Congress came to be known as Congress (O)—O for organization. Indira Gandhi was now the unchallenged leader of both the government and the new party, which soon became the real Congress. Shashi Tharoor has explained Indira Gandhi's success in the following words, ". .. for Shri Ekalavya, who thus became the youngest President in independent India's brief history, and the first one not to have been the official nominee of the Kaurava Party" (p.350).

The last chapter of Book XVI of *The Great Novel* elucidates a major political-military crisis which broke out in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1971. The basic idea behind the creation of Pakistan was religion. But religion was not enough to weld together the Punjabi-speaking part of West Pakistan with the Bengali-speaking East Pakistan. The West Pakistani political and economic elite soon acquired a dominant position in Pakistan's army, bureaucracy, economy and polity resulting in economic and political discrimination against East Pakistan. Consequently the people of East Pakistan developed a powerful movement for greater autonomy of East Pakistan.

In December 1970, General Yahya Khan, the military dictator of Pakistan, held free elections in which Bengal's Awami Party under the popular leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman won more than 99 percent of the seats in East Bengal and an overall majority in Pakistan's National Assembly. But the army and Yahya Khan, backed by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the leading politician of West Pakistan, refused to let the Awami Party form the government. When the latter started a civil disobedience movement to enforce the constitutional provision, in

a sudden move on 25 March 1971, Yahya Khan ordered a military crackdown on East Pakistan. Mujibur Rahman was arrested and taken to an unknown destination in West Pakistan. The West Pakistani Army initiated a reign of terror, killing innocent citizens, burning villages and corps. The Awami League leaders, who succeeded in escaping to Calcutta, organized the Mukti Bahini (Liberation Army) and launched a fierce underground movement and guerrilla warfare.

In India there was a wave of sympathy for the people of East Bengal. A large number of Muslims, Christians and Buddhists were forced to migrate to and seek shelter in West Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya. By November 1971, the number of refugees from East Bengal had reached ten million. Narrating the refugee problem Shashi Tharoor writes,... "the repression of the Gelabins following the imposition of martial law sent a panic-stricken flood of brutalized humanity flooding across our borders to create, on Indian soil, the biggest refugee problem the world has ever known" (p.354). The Indian armed forces, led by General J.S. Arora and joined by the Mukti Bahini, having surrounded Dacca on 13 December, forced the defeated and demoralized 93,000 strong Pakistani army in Bangladesh to surrender on 16 December.

Indira Gandhi proved the quality of being a good leader and administrator in Bangladesh crisis. Throughout the crisis, she acted with immense courage but also with abundant caution and careful and cool calculation. Indira Gandhi believed that if it was to be war, it should come at a time of India's choosing. Moreover, to secure India against a possible US-China intervention, on 9 August she swiftly signed a 20 year Indo-Soviet Treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation. Bangladesh war enhanced Indira's popularity as Shashi Tharoor has also mentioned the same view in the novel:

Seventeen days was all it took to sweep across the fields and rivers of East Karnistan ... while it made Priya Duryodhani a national heroine . . . This woman who had never married . . . became known as 'Ma Duryodhani' and Duryodhani Amma' to a people who saw in her the embodiment of the female principle of Shakti... (p.355).

The seventeenth Book of the novel puts forward India's greatest political crisis since independence when Internal Emergency was declared by Indira Gandhi on 26 June 1975. By the beginning of 1973 Indira Gandhi's popularity began to decline. Law and order deteriorated, particularly during 1974-75. A major upheaval occurred in Gujarat in January 1974 when popular anger over the rise in the prices of food grains, cooking oil and other essential commodities exploded in the state in form of a student movement. For more than ten weeks the state faced virtual anarchy with strikes, looting, rioting and arson. A same kind of movement emerged in Bihar led by Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as JP who gave a call for 'Total Revolution' or a struggle against the very system which has compelled almost everybody to go corrupt. Shashi Tharoor writes about Jayaprakash, "Jayaprakash Dron emerged from his retreat and called for a people's uprising against Priya Duryodhani" (p.361). The JP movement attracted wide support especially from students, middle classes, traders and a section of intelligentsia. Indira Gandhi challenged JP to test their respective popularity in Bihar as also the country as a whole in general elections due in February-March 1976. But before that a sudden twist to Indian politics was given by a Judgment on 12 June 1975 by Justice Sinha of the Allahabad High Court, on an election petition by Raj Narain, declaring Indira's election invalid. The conviction also meant that she could not seek election to parliament or hold office for six years and therefore could not continue as Prime Minister. J P and coalition of opposition parties decided to seize the opportunity. In a rally in Delhi on 25 June they announced a nation-wide one-week campaign of mass mobilization and civil disobedience to force Mrs Gandhi to resign. The campaign began

with the gherao of the PM's house by hundreds of thousands of volunteers. J P asked the people to make it impossible for the government to function. Mrs Gandhi's lightning response was to declare a state of Internal Emergency on 26 June. The period of Emergency is considered as the 'black period' of Indian politics by many historians. Many opposition leaders were arrested and censorship was imposed on the press. With the help of Emergency Indira Gandhi endeavored to make her position strong. In Book XVII, Shashi Tharoor describes "Yes Duryodhani's motives in proclaiming a stage of Siege, arresting a number of opponents and imposing censorship on the press were primarily cynical and self-serving . . ."

(p.369)

On 18 January 1977, Mrs Gandhi suddenly announced that elections to Lok Sabha would be held in March. In this election Congress party under the leadership of Indira Gandhi suffered a big defeat and Janta Party came to power, and Morarji Desai sworn in as the Prime Minister. But soon Janata Party government fell down because of internal conflicts and Indira Gandhi again came to power in January 1980 election with overwhelming majority.

Thus, we see that in the comparison of Duryodhana and Indira Gandhi the focus is to draw attention to Indira Gandhi's arrogance and high-handedness. In Mahabharata Duryodhana destroys dharma many times. This resembles in the character of Indira Gandhi when she proclaims Emergency and censors press. During Emergency she ruled like a dictator. The popularity of Indira Gandhi which was at its peak during Bangladeshi crisis suddenly declined within four years. The golden opportunity which Indira got frittered away within four years. The novel focuses on Indira Gandhi's politics of populism and the degeneration of democracy which flourished during her era.

Conclusion

The political allegory, depicted in *The Great Indian Novel*, through the comparison of leaders of Indian National Movement with the characters of Mahabharata explains how democratic ideals began to decline. Although the comparison is at the surface level, it successfully elaborates historical events through myth. This interesting confluence of myth and history shows how individual ambitions have retarded the progress of the nation. The novelist has elucidated serious and profound issues in a non-serious manner. Indira Gandhi's declaration of Emergency has been described in the event when Priya Duryodhani orders to strip off Draupadi Mokrasia who represents democracy of India. In the last book of the novel Shashi Tharoor writes, "whatever our ancestors expected of India, Ganpathi, it was not this. It was not a land where dharma and duty have come to mean nothing" (p.411). It is true that the politics of populism and degeneration of democracy have shattered the dream of our ancestors to see India as a super power. Shashi Tharoor strives to explore a new India by combing myth with history.

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