

## EXPLORING INDIA AND INDIANNESS THROUGH CINEMA: SHASHI THAROOR'S *SHOW BUSINESS*

**Manjeet Kumar Rai**  
Assistant Professor-  
Department of English  
Govt. Degree College  
Chandrabadni, Uttarakhand

### Abstract

Shashi Tharoor is a major voice and well-known literary artist in Indian English Literature. He is a prolific author of almost fifteen books. Through all his writings, fictional or non-fictional, Tharoor affirms and enhances Indian cultural identity by reflecting on pluralism and openness in India's kaleidoscopic culture. He also aims to broaden our understanding of Indian culture and its historical heritage. It is the plural image of India that attracts Shashi Tharoor very much and it is the main force, motivation and inspiration behind all his, literary and non-literary, writings. Tharoor, in his second novel *Show Business*, makes use of cinema as a new metaphor to explore different aspects of the Indian condition. The novelist illustrates the film culture in India against the background of contemporary myths. To him the film world embodies the very idea of India's diversity. Tharoor's personal standpoint is more explicit than most contemporary writers. A social and political ideology is clearly articulated in his all fictional and non-fictional works. So, in the present paper, Tharoor's *Show Business* is read and examined in close conjunction with, his idea of plural India and sense of Indianness through cinema (*Show Business*).

**Key Words:** India, Indian, Indianness, cinema or film, diverse or plural, Hindu, dharma, philosophy

Published in 1991, *Show Business* is Tharoor's second novel which endeavors to comprehend India, her people and the phenomenon called 'Indianness'. Actuated by a sense of concern and curiosity, the novel is in fact a candid answer to the queries disturbing the author, who argues:

“What do these stories tell to the Indians? What do they tell about Indians? What can we know about the world from which these stories come? That is the world of the film makers and the actors who make these films? And in turn, what does this all reveal about India as a society today?” (Kriesler).

Describing the themes of *Show Business* Anita Parihar asks certain pertinent and relevant questions regarding the role of films in India:

Shashi Tharoor builds up the theme of *Show Business* through the reel that runs in Ashok Banjara's mind and the voices he hears. *Show Business* treats show business at two levels- the political and the reel level. Contradictory worlds are presented through the two levels. At the political level a chaotic, complex democracy emerges and at the reel level a highly fantastic, exaggerated India emerges. What is the role of films in a country like India? Is it pure entertainment, a means of mass escapism, Or, does it have a more significant role to play? These are the questions that the novel tends to raise. (29)

Tharoor, in his novel *Show Business*, chooses to satirize this world. Mohd. Bashiruddin observes: "Shashi Tharoor's novel *Show Business* (1991) is a 'novel of India'. It is a postmodern satirical parody . . . . It is a triumphant novel about the razzle-dazzle Hindi film industry. It confirms Shashi Tharoor's reputation as one of India's most important voices. It also confirms Tharoor's status and fame as a writer of world stature" (29).

When Tharoor wrote the novel *Show Business*, some critics were surprised because they expected him to follow *The Great Indian Novel* and not a work that dealt with the trashy world of commercial Bombay cinema. But he did so because, to him, Indian films, with all their limitations and outright idiocies, represent part of the hope for India's future. In a country that is still (whatever the official figures say) almost 40 per cent illiterate, films represent the prime vehicle for the transmission of popular culture and values. Bollywood and its regional offshoots produce more than 800 films a year in nineteen languages and employ 2.5 million people, and their movies are watched over and over again by the Indian masses, especially those with few other affordable forms of entertainment. In India, popular cinema emerges from, and has consistently reflected, the diversity of the pluralist community that makes this cinema. The 'stories they tell are silly, the plots formulaic, the characterizations superficial, the action predictable, but they are made and watched by members of every community in India. Muslim actors play Hindu heroes; South Indian heroines are chased around trees by North Indian rogues. Representatives of some communities may be stereotyped (think of the number of alcoholic Christians played by Om Prakash, including in *Zanjeer*) but good and bad are always shown as being found in every community. To take just one recent popular film: a Marathi-speaking 'playback signer' records an Urdu poet's lyrics to the tune of a Tamil Muslim's music; her voice is then lip-synched by a Telugu actress, swaying to the choreography of a Goan Christian dance director, as she is romanced by a Punjabi superstar; the resulting film, produced by a Gujarati and directed by a Bengali, is then promoted by a Jewish public relations executive and watched by Indians of every imaginable caste, creed, cuisine, costume and consonant, from all over the country. The film world embodies the very idea of India's diversity in the very way in which it is organized. To him: "The whole point of Indianness is its pluralism" (*The Elephant, the Tiger and the Cell Phone* 61).

Undoubtedly, cinema or films are the primary vehicle for the transmission of ideas. In India it has got a peculiar privilege and position which not only entertains but also instructs to the common mass of our society leaving indelible mark on the psyche of common people through the ample amount of audio-visual effects. Films, in India, have always reflected the diversity of pluralist society and their pleasures and pains. Besides, they are being used to foster

communal harmony and a feeling of tolerance and brotherhood among different communities in India. Tharoor has himself confessed:

1970 mega hit “Amar Akbar Anthony”, for instance, was an action adventure film about three brothers separated in infancy who are brought up by different families – one a Christian, one a Hindu and one a Muslim. As a result, one is a smuggler, one a street fighter. How they discover each other and turn on the villains is why the audience flocked to the films . . . but in the process they also received the clear message that Christians, Hindus and Muslims are metaphorically brothers too, seemingly different but united in their common endeavor for justice. (qtd. in Sharma & Roy 03)

The film world embodies the very idea of India’s diversity in the way in which it is organized, staffed and financed-and in the stories it tells, Hindi movies are all for escapist entertainment, so long as it serves to communicate the diversity that is the basis of the Indian heritage, by offering all of us a common world to which to escape, by allowing us to dream with our eyes open. The popular entertainment can unite our diverse communities. Presenting a striking example Tharoor avers:

A lovely story that illustrates the cultural synthesis of Hinduism and Islam in India was recounted by two American scholars, Lloyd Susan Rudolph. It seems an Indian Muslim girl was asked to participate in a small community drama about the life of Lord Krishna, the Hindu god adored by shepherdesses, who dance for his pleasure (and who exemplify through their passion the quest of the devout soul for the lord.) Her father forbade her to dance as a shepherdess with the other schoolgirls. In that case, said the drama’s director, we will cast you as Krishna. All you have to do is stand there in the usual Krishna pose, a flute at your mouth. Her father consented, and so the Muslim girl played Krishna. (*Bookless in Baghdad* 105)

In *Show Business*, Tharoor suggests that these entertainments, these distractions, reveal a great deal about himself and people like him who go to these films. And in the process he is revealing India.

Re-asserting and reinventing a sense of Indianness, Tharoor explores the Bombay movie industry and its films, which he considers to be the primary vehicle for the transmission of fictional experience to a majority of Indians. Justifying the use of this cinema based metaphor in *Show Business* during an interview, he explained:

“In the second novel, I . . . looked at stories . . . of the popular film industry. Why? Because our country is still fifty percent illiterate and films still represent the principal vehicle for the transmission of fictional experience. Other than your grandmother telling you the stories on her knee, you go off and get your fiction by watching a movie” (Kreisler).

*Show Business* is, at its simplest, a satirical account of Bollywood, or the Bombay (now Mumbai) film industry. The story of *Show Business* charts the career of a socially well-placed but indigent theater actor Ashok Banjara, who decides to abandon his safe place in politics and aspires to be a superstar in Hindi cinema.

Almost an instant success in the film industry with his second movie *Godambo*, Ashok is elevated to the stature of a dashing matinee idol virtually overnight. From then on there is no looking back for him, and he moves undeterred from one success to another. He marries Maya,

his co-star and an excellent actress, and fathers a set of triplets. His professional career includes fifty conventional movies replete with the mundane, meaningless and hollow messages decorated by shallow verse. Apparently, with his growing success Ashok acquires a lot of illegal wealth, which he salts away in a Swiss bank account. Ashok gradually distances himself from his family and his morals during his journey to success and fame, satisfying his lust for money and beautiful company. This Bollywood star Ashok Banjara is hero of *Godambo*, *Judai*, *Dil Ek Qila*, *Mechanic*.

In his last movie *Kalki*, he is critically ill, fighting for his life in the intensive care unit of one of Bombay's hospitals. He is able to relive his career for us and his reverie is the main narration: "Me, Ashok Banjara, best-educated actor in the Hindi film world, former Member of Parliament, man of action who gave both man' and 'action' a new definition, Bollywood's first megastar and most articulate of interviewees, lying in a hospital bed festooned in tubes and drips and bandages, listening to the hate and frustration and regret of a motley cast of characters from my life" (Tharoor, *Show Business* 303).

Everyone living in India knows well that Bombay (now Mumbai) is more famous as a celluloid city which is synonyms to Bollywood - a city of producers, directors, artists and film stars. This tinsel town is a big site of business and, simultaneously, is famous for its snobbery, its huge spendings, its creation of huge illusions, its escapist entertainment and its yellow journalism, scandals and hypocrisy etc.

Shashi Tharoor's *Show Business* deals in great analytical accuracy with the central socio-cultural feature of the life of the common Indian. Actually he lampoons the Indian film industry for its artificiality and superficiality, the frames have stuck into rich boy meets poor girl . . . or vice-versa or boy meets girl . . . love at first sight: "It's impossible: all these rich girl - poor boy fantasies the, Hindi films churn out fly in the face of every single class, 'caste and social consideration of the real India. 'Just giving the lower classes the wrong ideas', Dad growled, not entirely in jest. After all, the dramatic rise in what the papers call eve-teasing, which is really nothing less than the sexual harassment of women in the street, isn't entirely unconnected with Hindi films . . . the lout thinks he'll get the rich girl just as you do in the movies. Except that in real life, the rich girl won't look at him, let alone sing duets with him" (248).

It is no exception that Indian films mirror the social, political and cultural realities of common Indians. So it is not surprising that Shashi Tharoor lampoons the Indian film industry for its artificiality, superficiality and occasional hypocrisy and uses the conventional framework of a rich boy meeting a poor girl or vice versa or love at first sight. However, in Bollywood, this love at first sight is looked at with disapproval and hatred. It invites lots of fighting sequences but finally, everything ends on a happy note.

The transition of Ashok from a romantic hero to the leader of the masses finds many echoes in India's political history. Ashok is now a politician and Tharoor is reminding us of the great Indian contemporary fact that film stars have turned politicians- N. I. Ramarao, MGR, Sunil Dutta, Amitabh Bachchan, Rajesh Khanna, Shatrughan Sinha, Vinod Khanna, Raj Babbar, Govinda and recently and most astonishingly Smriti Irani (our current HRD minister in NDA government) and so on and so forth.

Even the very first and superficial reading of the novel reveals the detail account of the life and experiences of a filmi superstar both in the Indian film industry and in the Indian Parliament. However, the author's extensive and extended use of satire in the story makes it more funny, clever and a pointed manifestation of India's glamorous social and political realities. *Show Business* is, in fact, an exposition of a highly entertaining continuum of Tharoor's conscious and

deliberate desire to reinvent and reveal India to himself and his readers. Once again acquainting himself with his country by perceiving it through the cinema produced by her people, Tharoor dwells upon another crucial nuance contributing to the contemporary and modern essence of Indianness - the circumstances dominating the nation's film industry and film fraternity-which plays a powerful role in influencing the people and their thought process.

Tharoor both glorifies and lampoons the very idea of an Indian's existence in the sense of reality and fantasy. Indianisms, in the Bollywood industry outmoded concepts of morality persist as myths in the Indian psyche. Shashi Tharoor asks a question: "I also looked at stories . . . in two cases, of the popular film industry. Why? Because . . . films still represent the principal vehicle for the transmission of the fictional experience. Other than your grandmother telling you the stories on her knee, you go off and get your fiction by watching a movie. So I ask the question, what do these stories tell to Indians? What do they tell about Indians" (Kreisler)

He himself has answered this question in *Show Business*:

In all Hindi films there is only one theme - the triumph of good over evil. The actual nature of the evil, the precise characteristics of the agent of good, may vary from film to film. The circumstances may also change, as do the stories in our Puranas. The songs vary, as do our religious bhajans. But there is no duality between the actor and the heroes he portrays. He is all of them, and all of them are manifestations of the Essential Hero. Therein lies the subconscious appeal of the Hindi film to the Indian imagination, and the appeal, alongwith it, of the Hindi film hero. (213)

The teeming millions of Indian society that through the movie temples lustily look for three hours of 'reel' life unlike 'real' life to men and women with beautiful faces and provoking bodies so Bollywood sell dreams just as Raj Kapoor has exclaimed 'nobody wants to see reality and so I am selling dreams'. Raj Kapoor sold the perfect mixture of morality with masala as in his most famous movie *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*, so he put religion along side sensuality and presto! The product was a three hour Bollywood film with myriad dream sequences. This explains why: "The bulk of the people are deeply influenced by the films they have (seen) - they believe in these dreams more uncritically than any other audience in the world. To forget the squalid reality of his own life, a poor man will visit the cinema every day" (qtd. in Takhar). Echoing Karl Marx's dictum that 'religion is the opium of common people' and watching the penchant for cinema of common mass in the country like India, we can say that cinema, in contemporary times, is the opium of the masses; senses are dulled on this lulling formula. Tharoor descends on Bollywood like a falcon surveying the scene.

His presentation of the Bollywood star in the *Show Business* is like a case study giving credibility to the haunting world of another reality. The narrator has responsibility to report the case accurately and this prevents him from using either unconventional language or experimental modes of narration. The characters of Tharoor, have deeper connections with the social world and are more susceptible to its corruption. The *Upanishads*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Mahabharata* offer guidance to Tharoor.

In his *Show Business*, he quotes a verse from Valmiki's *Ramayana* through a character named Ashwin wherein he teaches what *Dharma* is to his brother Ashok and tells him that life without regrets is a life lived without introspection. Thus, *dharma* has been incorporated within the text, as a conducting paragraph in *Show Business*.

The concept of Purushartha occupies a central place in Indian philosophy. It is divided into four constituents viz. *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*. Indian philosophy sees the material or

physical existence of human beings on this planet as a prison, the specific term used for it is 'Bandhan' and considers 'Moksha' or salvation as the ultimate aim of human life. 'Bandhan' entails the cycle of birth, death and re-birth and, simultaneously, pains, troubles and tortures of life. But our philosophy also offers a solution and it is the attainment of 'Moksha' or complete freedom. Actually, Purushartha is a way to attain 'Moksha'. The very first step in the way of attaining moksha is 'Dharma'. Dharma, I think, is the most alive, eternal, flexible and untranslatable word or term in Indian culture and philosophy because it contains multiple meanings and hence multiple interpretations. However, it has been misinterpreted by many scholars. Dharma has nothing to do with a particular religion but, being irrespective of any religion, it shows its relation with every existing human being and even inanimate things. Dharma changes according to the nature, place, time, context and behavior of particular thing or person. And so it is eternal and flexible. Actually it describes the basic nature or qualities of a person or thing which gives that thing or person an identity. Tharoor has dealt with the concept of Purushartha in *Show Business* to a great extent. Some pages (214 to 222) have been impressively coloured by Tharoor on this very concept Purushartha, prakriti, purus and dharma. We find a good aura of discussion and, simultaneously, they help in understanding the psyche of the author. On moksha Tharoor writes: "Moksha or salvation is the thing – the idea is not to seek forgiveness for sin and liberation from guilt but to escape ultimately the entire human condition, to be liberated from space and time and the endless cycle of birth and rebirth" (219).

Shashi Tharoor is using the concept of *Dharma* in a broader sense. He has derived this concept from the Hindu scriptures where there are various forms of *Dharma*. Hinduism does not advocate a monistic view of *Dharma*. Rather, the word is loaded with meaning to suit every occasion and life in its various discussions. Tharoor deals the matter of dharma very seriously in his novels. Hovering on the relevance and role of the big issues in Indian society like secularism in religion and dharma in Purushartha (particularly adhering to dharma), Tharoor very categorically and emphatically avers his views:

So irreligion was not the issue; every religion flourishes in India. In my *The Great Indian Novel* in 1989, I even argued the case for restoring dharma its place in Indian public life. One reader, the retired director-general of police of Tripura, B.J.K. Tampi, wrote to assert the broad meaning of dharma. 'In Hindi,' he writes, '*dharma* means only faith or religion. But in Sanskrit the word has a pre-eminently secular meaning of social ethics covering law-abiding conduct' . . . Fair enough: in fact, in an afterword to my novel I had listed a whole series of meanings that have ascribed to the term 'dharma' – an untranslatable Sanskrit term that is, nonetheless, cheerfully defined an unitalicized entry in many an English dictionary. (The Chambers Twentieth-Century Dictionary defines it as 'the righteousness that underlies the law'). I agree with Tampi that no one-word translation ('faith', 'religion', 'law') can convey the full range of meaning implicit in the term. 'English has no equivalent for *dharma*,' writes P. Lal, defining dharma as 'code of good conduct, pattern of noble living, religious rules and observance'. In his *The Speaking Tree*, Richard Lannoy actually defines dharma in nine different ways in different contexts. These include moral law, spiritual order, sacred law, righteousness and even the sweeping 'the totality of social, ethical and spiritual harmony'. Indeed, dharma in its classic sense embraces the total

cosmic responsibility of both God and Man. (*The Elephant, the Tiger and the Cell Phone* 81-82)

In *Show Business*, the confused and inconclusive quest of *Dharma* makes us aware that the essential confusion lies in the mind of the central character and thus nothing outside-any proof can satisfy his strange discontent.

Ashok makes an appalling film, *Mechanic*, ostensibly to dramatize his newfound piety and humanitarianism in his political endeavour. But the film turns out instead to be his first fiasco. Although this cinema based campaign led by Ashok, succeeds in getting him an electoral victory, yet he soon discovers that popularity and fame in Bollywood does not automatically translate into success in politics. This disillusionment is worsened when Ashok, victimized by the manipulations of his party colleagues, is named in a scandal associated with his Swiss bank account, and is forced to resign his seat. Adding insult to injury, the reverberations of his political downfall irredeemably tarnish his screen image. Facing penury, Ashok tries to revive his film career but is disgracefully rejected. In desperation he agrees to make his comeback by acting in a quasi- religious film, a “mythological,” playing the God Kalki, come to right the wrongs and visit destruction on the corrupt and the evil. While shooting a crowded scene for the movie, Ashok’s flaming sword causes his horse to bolt, leading to a terrible accident in which many are fatally burnt alive.

Badly injured Ashok is in coma and lies in the town’s best hospital, visited by his family members and friends who knowing that he is unconscious and incapable to react, divulge their feelings for him in separate monologues. At the same time, thousands of fans of the megastar come from different parts of the country to stand outside the hospital and pray for his recovery but it vain, as Ashok never recovers.

In the event Ashok whose acting talents are not too good, becomes the star of *Godambo* and very soon superstar of Bollywood. The novel also takes us to the film sets of each one of the Ashok starrers and we gather that *Godambo* is the story of how Ashok, a patriotic policeman, brings to book *Godambo* the smuggler; played by Pranay, with the help of Abha, ‘Yesterday’s heartthrob, old enough to be Ashok’s mother and just about beginning to show it’ (03). In reel life Abha has the ‘famous bust out-thrust but in real life when Ashok seduces her he realizes in horror and disbelief:

I unhook her bra. It has left a pale discolored swathe across her back. She must hardly ever take it off Here I am, a normal, red-blooded, sexually deprived twenty-five –years - old Indian male, in intimate proximity to the most famous bosom in India, with only an unhooked bra between me and a vision of paradise My fingers, with a will of their own, reach for the cups, and lift the brassiere gently off her torso. I stare in shock. I can’t believe what I have just seen: breasts so shriveled and empty that they are like pockets of desiccated skin, their tips drooping in dry dismay. Abha’s bosom is that of a ninety- year-old. The most famous bust in India is a pair of falsies. (19-20)

Nothing in Bollywood is what it seems. Everything is make-believe. Ashok’s imagination is the slave of Abha - his first heroine, his first contact with the world of Hindi cinema. Abha initiated Ashok into the realities of Hindi cinema, the lobbying to get roles the false pretences, the casting couch are all ingredients of Bollywood life.

Ashok Banjara, who has personified a new kind of hero and lover, the good-bad hero, who reflects the psychological, changes in a vast number of people, who are located in a halfway

house-the transitional sector. The good - bad hero is neither overtly emotional like Majnu nor boyishly phallic like the Krishna-lover, he is very much dishum-dishum hero. Dished up with dollops of sentimentality, the Hindi movies churn a mélange of comedy and tear-jerker situations, the emotional catharsis for the viewer is so complete that one feels cleansed. The widowed mother, making carrot halwa and offering tea is popular stereotype . . . Inspector Ashok comes home to his widowed mother: “Mother asks son to quickly wash his mouth and hands since she has made him - ‘gajar ka halwa’ (25).

The last 15 years of Indian cinema have been dominated, indeed overwhelmed by Ashok Banjara. His phenomenally successful films have spawned a brand new genre which though strongly influenced by Hollywood action movies such as those of Clint Eastwood, is neither typically Western nor traditionally Indian. Ashok happily works on three films simultaneously. The day is divided into shifts, and the leading actors dart from set to set, film to film, blithely indifferent to story line or even script.

The Banjara hero is the good-bad hero, who lives on the margins of his society. His attachments are few but they are strong and silent. Prone to quick violence and to brooding periods of withdrawal, the good-bad hero is a natural Jaw-breaker, yet will not deviate from a strict private code of his own. He is often a part of the underworld but shares neither its sadistic nor its sensual excesses. If cast in the role of a policeman; he often bypasses cumbersome bureaucratic procedures to take the law in his own hands, dealing with criminals by adopting their own ruthless methods. His badness is not shown as intrinsic or immutable but as a reaction to the deprivation of early childhood, often a mother’s loss, absence, or ambivalence towards the hero: “Today we have with us a man who has sampled Kama, accumulated artha and seeks to fulfill dharma of service to the people” (216).

The film hero Ashok Banjara has two sides to his personality we refrain from using the word ‘split’ but prefer to say that Ashok Banjara lives two different types of life the ‘real’ life and ‘reel’ life. These overlapping modes of existence of a hero create in him conflicting tensions, which could very well lead to psychological distress. He projects larger than life image on screen but the same person after removing the grease paint he has to confront a reality so different and this could lead to a bewildering sequence of events: “You are not real. None of you is real. This is not real, only the pain is real. And me, I am not real either, and I will never be real again” (306).

In cinema to get perfect picture or to get sexy sensuous images so many retakes have to be perfected. These sexual scenes of clinging cleavages of singing in the rain are meant for arousal of libidinal desires and all and sundry in the audience enjoy the scene visually devouring the body of the heroine. The fictional locale in the song and dance sequence arouses not only the audience but also the hero and the heroine to a certain physical magnetism. Mehnaz Elahi, a sex siren of the film industry, top heroine of Bollywood has acted opposite Ashok in most of his movies, is subjected to an identical treatment:

MThe rain falls, my enthusiasm rises, her blouse falls and rises, and we sing-dance . . . I am still holding her when the whistle blows. I take her face in my hands, and in full view of the entire unit, kiss her full-bloodedly on the mouth. She does not pull herself away from me; I can feel her nipples harden against my shirt. Her tongue darts between my teeth, and my hands caress the small of her back, pressing her body into mine. Our need is so urgent we might have gone on . . . (135-136)

This unpatriotic, rather heretic dissemblance evidenced among the politicians of India is convincingly foregrounded by Kulbhushan Banjara in *Show Business*, when he equates and



draws a parallel between his own profession of a politician and that of this actor son Ashok. Despite having reiterated that they professionally belonged to the diverse worlds of reality and fantasy, he confesses in his monologue: “And yet I suppose our worlds are not that far apart after all. You function amid fantasies, playing your assigned role in a make-believe India that has never existed and can never exist. As a politician I too play a role in a world of make-believe, a world in which I pretend that the ideas and principles and values that brought me into politics can still make a difference. Perhaps I too am performing, Ashok, in an India that has never really existed and can never exist” (118).

The social, political and professional portrayal of India in Tharoor’s *Show Business* further establishes him as an undisputed Indian author who successfully accomplishes this task by using pointed satire which generates both humour and irony. The use of satire in this Bollywood oriented book has enabled Tharoor to recast and reinvent the ideas, the stories, the people and their predicaments in contemporary India, in a light that immediately provokes freshness of the perception.

A collage of shooting scripts and monologues, the narrative of the novel is unconventionally structured in a fragmented manner. Interspersing the first person narratives of the protagonist Ashok Banjara, with monologues of the other characters, and with scripts of formulaic Hindi films, the novel emerges as a categorical and a consummate exemplification of Tharoor’s innovative style of writing. Brilliantly divided into ‘takes’, the novel has six ‘takes’ each of two parts-‘Interior’ and ‘Exterior’. While each ‘interior’ consists of the internal reflections of the protagonist, revealing his real self, every ‘exterior’ is a detailed elucidation of his reel life. In other words, Tharoor intelligently divides all the ‘takes’ of his story into the introspections of Ashok Banjara calling them his ‘interior’, and the elaborate elucidation of the latter’s profession, his ‘exterior’. In fact by adopting this narrative technique Tharoor highlights the duality in Ashok’s glamorous and successful life. He further adds colour to the narrative by ending all his ‘takes’ with expressive interior monologues of the different characters of the novel.

Tharoor thus makes use of cinema as a new metaphor to explore different aspects of the Indian condition. The novelist illustrates the film culture in India against the background of contemporary myths. He selects the Mumbai film world only to present a satirical story of hits and misses in the world of films and politics. In fact, he invents a fictional world to transmit his ideas of deeper concern. Tharoor’s *Show Business* entertains as well as enlightens us about some dark realities of contemporary India. It transports us to a magical world of sensual pleasure and highlights some of the social, cultural and political realities of India. In addition, it reflects the diversity of pluralist society as well as the pleasures, pains, procrastinations and predicaments of the majority of Indian people. As a matter of fact, even a commercial film-maker contributes towards, and helps articulate and give expression to the cultural identity of the society. Culture and development, films and identity, are fundamentally linked and interdependent. We have heard in the past that the world must be made safe for democracy. That goal is increasingly being realized; it is now time for all of us to work to make the world safe for diversity. It is an honest and candid representation of the degenerated subcontinent. While in *The Great Indian Novel* Tharoor confined himself to an elite group of leaders of the country, in *Show Business* he elucidates the profligacy and the corruption, which characterize a majority of India’s politicians. The descriptions of the unscrupulous Sugriva Sharma, the cunning Dr. Gangoolie and the suggestive revelations made by Kulbhushan Banjara are clear evidences of the immorality and perversion afflicting India’s society and polity.

Shashi Tharoor also shows his socio-moral vision and mourns for the lack of *Dharma* in modern times. In a post modernistic world, where there is change in moral standards, very few committed artists with a philosophic vision can wage a strong war against the break-down of basic human values. Tharoor considers his art as a medium through which he tries to resurrect the lost dignity of the human being. Art therefore seems to turn into a didactic weapon by which he reinstates the lost glory of the world. In a society with the “transvaluation of values”, a rigid, inflexible values system is an anachronism. Neither Ashok Banjara nor any character is interested in that rigid system. Sometimes personal interest blinds one’s *dharmic* eye. Then man falters and makes errors. Of course, the novel has a point; it describes the happenings and mishappenings of our present day society and the novelist mourns at the lack of *dharma* in our society.

Tharoor thus makes use of cinema as a new metaphor to explore different aspects of the Indian condition. The novelist illustrates the film culture in India against the background of contemporary myths. He selects the Mumbai film world only to present a satirical story of hits and misses in the world of films and politics. In fact, he invents a fictional world to transmit his ideas of deeper concern. Tharoor’s *Show Business* entertains as well as enlightens us about some dark realities of contemporary India.

### Works Cited

- Bashiruddin, Mohd. Nasiruddin. “Metaphorical Description of Cinema in Shashi Tharoor’s *Show Business*.” [www.researchvistas.com](http://www.researchvistas.com) 03. 1 (2014). Web. 20 Sept. 2014.
- Kreisler, Harry. Interview. *Conversations with History: A conversation with Shashi Tharoor*. Institute of International Studies, UC Berkeley, 1999. Web, 17 Apr 2011.
- Parihar, Anita. “Shashi Tharoor’s *Show Business*: A Satire on Indian Democracy.” *The Commonwealth Review* 12. 1 (2000-2001). Print.
- Sharma, Amrendra and Manju Roy. “Dynamics of “Reel Life” and “Real Life” in Tharoor’s *Show Business*.” *The Indian Review of World Literature in English* 07. 2 (2011). 1-9. Web. 22 Apr. 2012.
- Takhar, Jennifer. “Identity through Bollywood Cinema: The “reel” or “real” zone?” *Literature and Culture of Pakistan in The Postcolonial Web*. [www.postcolonialweb.org/pakistan/literature/rushdie/takhar](http://www.postcolonialweb.org/pakistan/literature/rushdie/takhar) 15. html. Web. 17 Sept. 2014.
- Tharoor, Shashi. *Show Business*. New Delhi : Penguin Books, 1992. Print.
- - -. *Bookless in Baghdad: And Other Writings About Reading*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2005. Print.
- - -. *The Elephant, the Tiger and the Cell Phone: Reflections on India in the 21 century*. New Delhi: Penguin/Viking Books, 2007. Print. [www.shashitharoor.com](http://www.shashitharoor.com)