IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON CULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE NOVELS OF SHASHI THAROOR

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Abstract

Shashi Tharoor's novels often explore cultural conflicts and complexities prevalent in Indian society. His novels often delve into the religious and communal tensions that exist in India. He examines the conflicts between different religious communities, such as Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, and the impact of such conflicts on the society and individuals. His writings frequently touch upon the lingering effects of British colonialism in India. He explores the clash between the traditional Indian culture and the cultural influence of the British Raj, highlighting the struggle for identity and the conflicts arising from the imposition of Western values.Tharoor's novels also shed light on the deep-rooted caste system in Indian society. He portrays the struggles faced by individuals from marginalized castes and the discrimination they experience, often highlighting the conflicts and tensions arising from caste-based divisions. Tharoor's works also examine the impact of globalization on cultural identity. He addresses the conflicts faced by individuals torn between their Indian heritage and the influence of global trends, particularly in urban setting. His novels provide a nuanced portrayal of cultural conflicts in Indian society, examining various aspects of identity, religion, caste, tradition, and globalization.

Keywords: Cultural-conflicts, Colonialism, Tradition, Marginalized, Discrimination, Globalization.

Introduction

Globalization is a term that refers to the increasing interconnectedness, integration, and interdependence of economies, societies, cultures, and nations across the world.Globalization promotes the exchange of ideas, values, and cultural practices between different societies. It enables the spread of cultural products, such as music, movies, literature, and fashion, across the globe. Cultural exchange can lead to a blending of cultural elements, the emergence of new cultural forms, and the adoption of global cultural norms.Globalization is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that has transformed the world in various ways, affecting economies, cultures, societies, and individuals on a global scale.

Globalization has had a significant impact on cultural identity worldwide. It has led to the spread of cultural products, ideas, and values across borders, often resulting in a homogenization of cultures. Western popular culture, such as Hollywood movies, fast food chains, and fashion trends, has become ubiquitous in many parts of the world. As a result, local cultural practices and traditions may be overshadowed or even lost, leading to a loss of cultural diversity and a sense of cultural identity. It has also facilitated cultural exchange and hybridization. Different cultures interact and blend, leading to the creation of new cultural forms and practices. For example, fusion cuisine, where elements from different culinary traditions are combined, is a result of cultural mixing. This hybridization can lead to the emergence of unique cultural identities that are influenced by multiple sources.

On the other hand, globalization has also spurred efforts to preserve and revive traditional cultures. As people become more aware of the potential loss of their cultural heritage, there is a growing movement to reclaim and celebrate indigenous practices, languages, and art forms. Globalization has provided platforms for

cultural expressions to reach a wider audience, fostering cultural pride and revitalization.Globalization has also given rise to issues of cultural appropriation, where elements of one culture are adopted by another culture without proper understanding or respect. This leads to the commodification and misrepresentation of cultural practices, eroding the authenticity and significance of those practices for the communities from which they originate. Cultural appropriation creates tensions and conflicts around questions of ownership and respect for cultural boundaries.

Globalization has sparked a sense of resistance and identity assertion among communities seeking to protect and preserve their cultural traditions. Local communities and indigenous groups often strive to maintain their distinct cultural practices as a way to assert their identity in the face of global influences. This can manifest in various forms, including cultural festivals, language revitalization efforts, and the promotion of traditional art and craftsmanship.It is important to note that the impact of globalization on cultural identity is complex and multifaceted, and it varies across different regions and communities. While globalization has facilitated cultural exchange and opened up opportunities for cross-cultural understanding, it has also posed challenges to the preservation and authenticity of cultural identities. Balancing the benefits and potential risks of globalization on cultural identity is an ongoing and evolving process for societies around the world.

Shashi Tharoor, an acclaimed Indian author, politician, and former diplomat, has written several novels that explore a wide range of themes, including the impact of globalization. While globalization is not the central focus of all his works, it does play a significant role in shaping the narratives and characters in some of his novels. *The Great Indian Novel*, a satirical novel by Tharoor is a retelling of the Indian epic, *the Mahabharata*, in a contemporary setting. Through this work, Tharoor explores the transformation of Indian society in the wake of globalization. He examines the clash between traditional Indian values and the forces of globalization, which often lead to socio-cultural changes and challenges.

One of the central themes in *The Great Indian Novel* is the clash of cultures. Tharoor depicts the collision between traditional Indian values and the influences of globalization, which often lead to tensions and conflicts. Characters such as Dhritarashtra, the blind king, and Bhishma, the revered patriarch, embody the traditional Indian values that are at odds with the rapidly changing world. Their struggles to adapt to the forces of globalization highlight the challenges faced by individuals in reconciling their cultural heritage with the pressures of modernity.Another aspect of cultural identity in the novel is the issue of cultural appropriation. Tharoor portrays the power dynamics at play as dominant global cultures appropriate elements of marginalized or traditional cultures. Through characters like the Kauravas, who represent the elite class, Tharoor critiques the commodification and dilution of cultural practices that occur as a result of globalization. This portrayal raises questions about the erosion of cultural identity and the loss of authenticity that can arise from such practices.

Tharoor also highlights the loss and preservation of cultural heritage in the face of globalization. In *The Great Indian Novel*, characters such as Draupadi, the strong-willed princess, symbolize the struggle to maintain cultural identity in the midst of societal changes. Tharoor depicts the pressures on traditional cultural practices, such as arranged marriages and gender roles, as globalization brings in new ideas and influences. This exploration invites readers to reflect on the challenges faced by individuals and communities in preserving their cultural heritage and the potential consequences of its erosion.

He is known for his critical analysis of the impact of British colonialism on India and other former colonies, as well as his advocacy for reparations and restitution for the injustices committed during this period. He is also a vocal advocate for reparations and restitution for the injustices committed during colonialism. He has argued that Britain owes India reparations for the economic exploitation and human rights abuses committed during colonialism, and has called for the return of cultural artifacts and treasures that were looted from India during this period. His works deal with the 'matter of India' by re-writing its past and re-interpreting

it in various ways. The matter of his creative output is India. Reflecting on his writing, Tharoor states, "...my fiction seeks to reclaim my country's heritage for itself, to tell, in an Indian voice, a story of India" (*BIB*25). He has also stated elsewhere "I am a student of history and I am ... concerned with the recording of history ... My work is ... conscious about the various ways that history can be told and recorded" (211). His works deal with the past, present, and future of India. His endeavor to grapple with the culture, heritage, and history of his country reflects the pride in one's culture and history. His rewriting of India's history shows the postcolonial consciousness of an Indian writer who writes "to contradict the misperceptions and misrepresentations perpetuated in colonial discursive practices" (130). His writing poses a challenge to the western convention of history, fiction, and historiography. His works explore endless possibilities of history. He intermixes reality, history, and myth all into one in a fictional grab which at the same time interrogates the established boundary between fact and fiction. Plotz cites "*The Great Indian Novel* as one of the recent historical novels which continue Rushdie's task of chutnifying history of representing post-colonial Indianness in self-reflective post-modern texts" (Pandey 126). In addition to his writing, Tharoor has also been involved in political activism related to decolonization. He has called for the removal of colonial-era statues and monuments in India, and has been a vocal supporter of movements to rename streets and institutions named after colonial figures. Tharoor's works provide a powerful critique of colonialism and its lasting impact on the countries and peoples affected by it.

Tharoor's another novel *Show Business* delves into the world of Bollywood and the entertainment industry, shedding light on the effects of globalization on Indian cinema. Tharoor examines the influence of Western media and cultural trends on the Indian film industry, as well as the challenges faced by traditional Indian cinema in the face of globalization.The novel explores how globalization, particularly through advancements in technology and communication, has shaped India's emergence as a global economic player. Tharoor portrays the influence of Western media and cultural trends on the Indian film industry, which in turn affects the cultural identity reflected in Indian cinema.

Tharoor also raises questions about the impact of globalization on cultural authenticity in *Show Business*. The characters in the novel grapple with the tension between commercial success and maintaining cultural integrity. The pressures of globalization often lead to the dilution of traditional cultural elements in Bollywood films, as filmmakers cater to a global audience and incorporate Western storytelling techniques. This exploration prompts readers to consider the negotiation of cultural identity within the context of a globalized entertainment industry. Tharoor touches upon the emergence of hybrid identities in the novel. Characters such as Raman Kapoor, the protagonist, embody the complexities of navigating cultural identity in a rapidly changing world. Raman, born to Indian parents in the United States, struggles to reconcile his Indian heritage with his American upbringing. Tharoor portrays the experiences of such characters who inhabit the space between cultures, grappling with questions of belonging and authenticity

In *Riot*, Tharoor explores the impact of globalization on religious tensions and communal harmony. Set in the backdrop of religious riots in India, the story delves into the ways in which globalization can exacerbate existing divisions and conflicts, as well as how it provides opportunities for dialogue and understanding across different cultures.

Shashi Tharoor explores the impact of globalization on cultural identity, highlighting the tensions and transformations that arise as traditional cultural values encounter the forces of globalization. Tharoor also examines how globalization brings people from different cultures into contact with one another, resulting in clashes and conflicts between traditional cultural values and the influences of globalization. These clashes often lead to a re-evaluation of cultural identity, as characters navigate the complexities of reconciling their heritage with the changing world.

Tharoor portrays the challenges faced by traditional cultures in preserving their heritage in the face of globalization. He highlights the ways in which globalization can lead to the

dilution or commodification of cultural practices, and the subsequent loss of cultural identity. Tharoor often presents characters who navigate the complexities of hybrid identities, reflecting the influence of both traditional cultural values and globalized ideas and practices. These characters grapple with questions of authenticity and belonging, as they negotiate their cultural identity in a rapidly changing world.

Tharoor's novels delve into the complexities of cultural identity in the context of globalization. He raises important questions about the preservation of cultural heritage, the power dynamics between different cultures, and the negotiation of identity in an increasingly interconnected world. Tharoor's works encourage readers to critically examine the impact of globalization on cultural identity and to reflect on the ways in which individuals and communities navigate these dynamics.

Tharoor's portrayal of cultural identity in the context of globalization invites readers to critically examine the challenges faced by individuals and communities as they negotiate their cultural heritage in a rapidly changing world. He highlights the tensions that arise between traditional values and global influences, as well as the potential erosion or dilution of cultural practices. Tharoor also explores the emergence of hybrid identities, reflecting the complexities of navigating multiple cultural influences.Furthermore, Tharoor emphasizes the importance of dialogue, empathy, and understanding in bridging divides and fostering harmony amidst cultural differences. He showcases the potential for cultural exchange and the power of inclusive approaches to cultural identity.

Tharoor encourages readers to reflect on the preservation of cultural heritage, the dynamics of power and appropriation in a globalized world, and the ways in which individuals and communities negotiate their identities. Through his thought-provoking narratives, Tharoor invites us to critically examine the impact of globalization on cultural identity and to appreciate the richness and diversity of human experiences in an interconnected world.

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