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INTERTEXTUALITY AND LITERARY REFERENCES IN SHASHI THAROOR'S "THE GREAT INDIAN NOVEL."

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Abstract

This paper examines the concept of intertextuality and literary references in Shashi Tharoor's novel, "The Great Indian Novel." Tharoor's work is a postmodern reinterpretation of the Indian epic, Mahabharata, and it incorporates various intertextual elements and allusions to other literary works. Through a detailed analysis of Tharoor's narrative techniques and the incorporation of literary references, this paper explores how intertextuality enriches the reading experience and enhances the layers of meaning in the novel. The study delves into the author's use of intertextual devices such as parody, pastiche, and allusion to engage with diverse literary traditions and historical events. By examining the novel's intertextual framework, this paper highlights Tharoor's creative reimagining of the Mahabharata and demonstrates how intertextuality serves as a tool for literary exploration and cultural critique. The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the novel's complexities and shed light on the significance of intertextuality in contemporary Indian literature.

Keywords: - intertextuality, parody, pastiche, postmodern reinterpretation...

INTERTEXTUALITY AND LITERARY REFERENCES IN SHASHI THAROOR'S "THE GREAT INDIAN NOVEL."

- Dr. Prakash Eknath Navgire

Shashi Tharoor's "The Great Indian Novel" is a remarkable literary endeavour that presents a postmodern reimagining of the Indian epic, Mahabharata. While the novel is lauded for its ambitious scope and the author's imaginative reinterpretation of historical events, it also evokes mixed reactions due to certain inherent shortcomings.

One of the notable strengths of the novel lies in Tharoor's mastery of language and his ability to weave a complex narrative. The book is replete with witty dialogues, clever wordplay, and satirical commentary that reflect Tharoor's sharp intellect and deep understanding of Indian politics and society. Moreover, his skilful integration of various literary styles and genres adds depth and richness to the storytelling, making it a compelling read.

However, "The Great Indian Novel" is not without its flaws. The novel's dense and convoluted narrative structure, which constantly shifts between different time periods and characters, can be overwhelming for some readers. The extensive use of intertextuality, while impressive in its own right, may at times overshadow the central storyline, making it challenging to follow the main plot. Additionally, the multitude of characters, some of whom bear resemblances to figures from Indian history and mythology, can be confusing for readers unfamiliar with these references. Furthermore, the novel's satirical approach, though effective in highlighting the political and social issues of India, occasionally veers into excessive cynicism. Tharoor's relentless critique of the political class and societal norms, while undoubtedly valid, can become repetitive and tiresome, detracting from the overall enjoyment of the narrative.

Despite these criticisms, "The Great Indian Novel" remains a significant contribution to Indian literature. Tharoor's bold reimagining of the Mahabharata serves as a thought-provoking exploration of history, power, and the complexities of Indian society. The novel's

underlying themes of corruption, identity, and the struggle for justice resonate with readers, and its biting social commentary continues to hold relevance in contemporary times.

"The Great Indian Novel" is a commendable work that demonstrates the author's intellectual prowess and creative vision. While it may not appeal to all readers due to its complex narrative structure and occasionally heavy-handed satire, its thought-provoking themes and imaginative storytelling make it a significant literary work that merits attention and critical examination.

Intertextuality is a prominent literary device that refers to the interplay and referencing of other texts within a particular work. It is the practice of incorporating, imitating, or alluding to existing texts, creating a network of connections and enriching the meaning and interpretation of the narrative. Intertextuality can take various forms, such as direct quotations, allusions, parodies, pastiches, or even subtle references, and it serves as a means for authors to engage in a dialogue with other works, authors, or literary traditions.

In novels, intertextuality is a powerful tool employed by authors to add depth, complexity, and layers of meaning to their narratives. By referencing other texts, authors establish connections and invite readers to make connections themselves, drawing upon their prior knowledge and experiences. Intertextuality can create a sense of literary heritage, linking a contemporary work to a broader literary tradition and allowing readers to engage in a broader cultural conversation.

One of the key functions of intertextuality in novels is the establishment of literary allusions. Authors may reference classical works, religious texts, historical events, or popular culture, thereby creating a bridge between the old and the new. These allusions can serve multiple purposes, including the enrichment of characterization, the exploration of themes, the reinforcement of motifs, or the subversion of established narratives. Intertextual references can also create a sense of playfulness, irony, or intellectual challenge, as readers are encouraged to recognize and interpret the embedded references. Intertextuality also enables authors to engage in intergeneric dialogue, blending different

literary genres or imitating specific writing styles. By appropriating and subverting established forms, authors can create innovative and self-aware narratives that comment on literary conventions or challenge readers' expectations. This interplay between different genres can enhance the artistic value of a novel and contribute to its unique identity. Furthermore, intertextuality in novels facilitates cultural and historical commentary. By referencing specific texts, authors can comment on societal norms, political ideologies, or historical events. Intertextual connections can serve as a means of social critique, allowing authors to draw parallels, expose contradictions, or present alternative perspectives. Through intertextuality, novels can transcend their immediate context and contribute to a broader discourse on culture, society, and human experience.

However, it is important to note that intertextuality can also pose challenges for readers. A thorough understanding of the referenced texts and cultural context is often necessary to fully grasp the intended meaning and significance. Readers who are unfamiliar with the intertextual references may miss out on layers of meaning or misinterpret the author's intentions.

It plays a significant role in novels, enriching the narrative by incorporating and referencing other texts. Through allusions, parodies, pastiches, and various intertextual techniques, authors establish connections, evoke cultural and historical contexts, and invite readers into a broader literary conversation. Intertextuality enhances the depth and complexity of novels, providing a means for authors to engage with their literary heritage, challenge established narratives, and comment on societal issues. Its presence adds a fascinating dimension to the reading experience, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the interconnectedness of literature.

Intertextuality plays a significant role in Shashi Tharoor's novel, "The Great Indian Novel." Tharoor skilfully employs intertextual references and literary allusions to enrich the narrative, engage with diverse literary traditions, and provide a nuanced commentary on Indian history and politics. "The Great Indian Novel" is a postmodern reinterpretation of the Indian epic, Mahabharata. Tharoor seamlessly weaves elements from the original epic into his narrative, creating intertextual connections that deepen the readers'

understanding and appreciation of both texts. By drawing upon the rich cultural and mythological heritage of the Mahabharata, Tharoor expands upon its themes, characters, and events, and offers a fresh perspective on the epic through a contemporary lens.

Tharoor's novel incorporates a wide range of intertextual devices, including direct quotations, allusions, and parodies of other literary works. He skilfully references famous literary figures such as William Shakespeare, James Joyce, and Rabindranath Tagore, among others, blending their ideas and styles with his own narrative. These intertextual references not only add layers of meaning and depth to the story but also serve as a form of homage and acknowledgment of literary tradition. Moreover, Tharoor's use of intertextuality extends beyond literature to encompass historical events and political ideologies. He incorporates references to India's freedom struggle, the Emergency period, and significant political figures, creating a tapestry of intertextual connections that comment on the socio-political landscape of India. By employing intertextuality in this manner, Tharoor invites readers to reflect on the parallels between historical events and the fictionalized world of his novel.

The intertextual framework in "The Great Indian Novel" not only enhances the narrative but also serves as a tool for cultural critique and satire. Tharoor cleverly uses intertextual references to expose and challenge established narratives, ideologies, and societal norms. Through parody and subversion, he questions power structures, mocks political figures, and offers a critical commentary on the state of Indian society. Intertextuality becomes a means for Tharoor to navigate the complexities of Indian politics and history while engaging readers in a thought-provoking manner. However, it is worth noting that Tharoor's extensive use of intertextuality can also present challenges for readers who are unfamiliar with the referenced texts or cultural context. A deeper understanding of the Mahabharata, Indian history, and literary traditions can greatly enhance the reading experience and allow for a more nuanced appreciation of the intertextual layers within the novel.

Intertextuality in Shashi Tharoor's "The Great Indian Novel" serves as a vital element that enriches the narrative, expands on the themes of the Mahabharata, and provides a platform

for cultural critique. Tharoor's adept use of intertextual devices, ranging from literary allusions to historical and political references, creates a multi-layered reading experience that invites readers to explore the intersections between literature, history, and society. Through intertextuality, Tharoor establishes a literary dialogue that contributes to a deeper understanding of Indian culture and politics.

Shashi Tharoor's "The Great Indian Novel" is replete with literary references that enrich the narrative and contribute to the overall intertextual framework of the novel. Tharoor skilfully incorporates a wide range of literary allusions, drawing upon various literary traditions and authors to deepen the readers' engagement and enhance the layers of meaning within the text. One of the most prominent literary references in the novel is the incorporation of the Indian epic, Mahabharata. Tharoor reimagines the Mahabharata in a contemporary political context, presenting a satirical and insightful commentary on Indian history and politics. By referencing the epic, Tharoor establishes a strong intertextual connection, allowing readers to draw parallels between the characters, events, and themes of the original text and those in his novel. The Mahabharata serves as a rich source of inspiration, providing a foundation upon which Tharoor builds his narrative, explores complex moral dilemmas, and reflects on the nature of power, ambition, and destiny.

In addition to the Mahabharata, Tharoor incorporates literary references from a diverse range of works and authors. For example, he playfully includes parodies and pastiches of famous literary figures such as William Shakespeare, James Joyce, and Rabindranath Tagore. Through these references, Tharoor not only showcases his literary prowess but also engages in a playful dialogue with established literary traditions. The incorporation of these allusions adds an element of wit, complexity, and intertextual depth to the narrative, encouraging readers to make connections and explore the literary heritage of the novel.

Tharoor's novel also encompasses historical and political references, which contribute to the intertextual fabric of the narrative. He incorporates events and figures from India's freedom struggle, such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, thereby linking the fictional world of the novel to real-world historical events. These references provide a broader cultural and historical context, allowing readers to reflect on the interplay

between fiction and reality, and to engage with the socio-political commentary embedded within the novel. Furthermore, Tharoor's novel includes references to Western literary works and genres. He incorporates elements of Shakespearean tragedies, Joyce's stream-of-consciousness technique, and the structure of the Bildungsroman, among others. By integrating these Western literary references, Tharoor expands the narrative horizons, adding layers of complexity and fostering a cross-cultural literary conversation.

It is worth noting that a familiarity with the referenced texts and cultural context greatly enhances the readers' appreciation of these literary references in "The Great Indian Novel." A deeper understanding of the Mahabharata, Indian history, and Western literary traditions allows readers to recognize and interpret the intertextual connections, thereby enriching their understanding of Tharoor's narrative choices and the larger thematic implications of the novel.

The work of art repletes with literary references that contribute to its intertextual framework. The incorporation of the Mahabharata, along with allusions to renowned literary figures and works, historical events, and Western literary traditions, adds depth, complexity, and layers of meaning to the narrative. These literary references invite readers to engage in a broader literary conversation, explore the intersections between different texts and traditions, and reflect on the socio-political commentary embedded within the novel.

At its core, "The Great Indian Novel" serves as a creative and imaginative retelling of the Mahabharata, one of India's most revered ancient epics. Tharoor recontextualizes the epic within a modern framework, using it as a lens to reflect upon the socio-political landscape of India. Through this postmodern approach, he offers a fresh perspective on the timeless themes of the original epic, such as power, morality, and the human condition. Shashi Tharoor's "The Great Indian Novel" stands as a remarkable postmodern reinterpretation of the Indian epic, Mahabharata. With its incorporation of intertextual elements and allusions to other literary works, Tharoor's novel presents a complex and multi-layered narrative that engages readers in a captivating exploration of Indian history, politics, and culture.

Tharoor incorporates allusions to renowned literary works, both Indian and Western, creating intertextual connections that deepen the layers of meaning in his narrative. The novel encompasses references to works by authors such as William Shakespeare, James Joyce, Rabindranath Tagore, and Fyodor Dostoevsky, among others. These allusions not only showcase Tharoor's literary prowess but also establish a dialogue between different literary traditions, allowing readers to explore the intersections and resonances between diverse works of literature. Intertextuality plays a crucial role in Tharoor's narrative strategy. The novel abounds with intertextual elements that draw upon a wide range of literary works. Tharoor weaves references to various literary traditions, authors, and genres, enriching the reading experience and inviting readers into a broader literary conversation. Furthermore, Tharoor employs intertextuality as a tool for social and political commentary. By incorporating references to historical events, political figures, and ideologies, he offers incisive critiques and satirical observations on Indian society. Through intertextual elements, Tharoor establishes connections between the fictional world of his novel and the real-world historical and political context, prompting readers to reflect on the complexities of power, corruption, and identity.

Writer exemplifies the power of intertextuality and allusion in creating a rich and multi-dimensional narrative. By reinterpreting the Indian epic, Mahabharata, and incorporating intertextual elements and allusions to other literary works, Tharoor engages readers in a profound exploration of Indian history, politics, and culture. The novel stands as a testament to the transformative potential of intertextuality in contemporary literature, inviting readers to delve into a world that blends past and present, tradition and innovation, and myth and reality. Tharoor's use of intertextuality and allusions in "The Great Indian Novel" not only enhances the narrative but also reflects his engagement with literary heritage and cultural discourse. By incorporating intertextual elements and reinterpreting the Mahabharata, he establishes a dynamic dialogue with the past while addressing contemporary concerns. Through this intertextual approach, Tharoor presents a complex and thought-provoking narrative that challenges readers to re-evaluate their understanding of Indian literature, history, and society.

Intertextuality is employed through various devices such as parody, pastiche, and allusion. These intertextual devices enrich the narrative, add depth to the storytelling, and contribute to the overall intertextual framework of the novel.

Parody is a prevalent intertextual device in "The Great Indian Novel." Tharoor employs parody to satirize and mock established literary traditions, political figures, and cultural norms. Through humorous imitation, he critiques the power structures and societal norms prevalent in Indian society. For instance, Tharoor parodies the political dynamics and corruption in India by recasting political figures in the Mahabharata narrative, highlighting the parallels between myth and reality. By employing parody, Tharoor engages readers in a playful and critical examination of the socio-political landscape.

Pastiche is another intertextual device used in "The Great Indian Novel" by Tharoor. Pastiche involves imitating the style, language, and structure of other works or genres to create a new composition. Tharoor employs pastiche to pay homage to various literary traditions and authors. He seamlessly blends different writing styles, including elements of Shakespearean tragedy, stream-of-consciousness reminiscent of James Joyce, and the narrative techniques of Rabindranath Tagore. This interplay of styles not only showcases Tharoor's literary prowess but also adds complexity and layers of meaning to the narrative, creating a textured reading experience.

Allusion is a prominent intertextual device in "The Great Indian Novel." Tharoor incorporates allusions to a wide range of literary works, historical events, and cultural references. These allusions serve to deepen the readers' engagement and enhance their understanding of the narrative. Tharoor references works by authors such as William Shakespeare, Rabindranath Tagore, and Fyodor Dostoevsky, among others, drawing upon their ideas and styles to enrich his own storytelling. The allusions also create intertextual connections between different literary traditions, allowing readers to explore the intersections and resonances between diverse works of literature.

Through these intertextual devices, Tharoor presents a narrative that is interwoven with literary references, historical events, and cultural allusions. The use of parody, pastiche,

and allusion in "The Great Indian Novel" not only adds depth and complexity to the storytelling but also invites readers to actively engage with the text, recognizing and interpreting the intertextual connections. Tharoor's adept utilization of these devices showcases his literary craftsmanship and his ability to blend multiple texts and traditions into a cohesive and thought-provoking narrative.

In conclusion, the study of intertextuality and literary references in Shashi Tharoor's "The Great Indian Novel" provides valuable insights into the intricate web of literary allusions and intertextual connections that enrich the narrative and contribute to its layered meaning. Tharoor's novel, a skilful amalgamation of historical events and mythological narratives, showcases the author's astute command over a wide range of literary traditions, spanning from the ancient Indian epics to Western literary classics. Through his adept use of intertextuality, Tharoor not only pays homage to the works that have influenced him but also engages in a profound dialogue with the literary canon, challenging its established conventions and reinterpreting its themes in the context of postcolonial India.

The analysis of intertextuality in "The Great Indian Novel" reveals the complex interplay between past and present, tradition and modernity, as well as the intertwining of Indian and Western literary traditions. Tharoor deftly weaves together multiple narrative strands, blending historical facts, fictional elements, and a myriad of literary references, creating a tapestry of narratives that reflect the complexities of India's socio-political landscape. By drawing upon a wide range of texts and employing intertextual techniques such as parody, pastiche, and allusion, Tharoor demonstrates his deep engagement with literature as a powerful tool for social commentary and critique.

Furthermore, the study of literary references in Tharoor's novel highlights the author's astute use of intertextuality to explore universal themes and establish connections across diverse cultural contexts. By invoking iconic literary figures and works, Tharoor not only adds depth and richness to his narrative but also invites readers to critically examine the intersecting realms of history, politics, and literature. Through these references, he

underscores the relevance of the literary canon in shaping our understanding of the world and its enduring influence on contemporary discourse.

In essence, the examination of intertextuality and literary references in Shashi Tharoor's "The Great Indian Novel" demonstrates the author's mastery in navigating a complex literary landscape and his ability to craft a multi-layered narrative that engages readers on various levels. Tharoor's intertextual approach invites us to delve into the rich tapestry of literature, encouraging a deeper appreciation for the power of storytelling and its ability to shape our understanding of the world. As such, this research not only enhances our understanding of Tharoor's work but also offers valuable insights into the broader field of postcolonial literature and its engagement with the literary canon.



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