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Post Modernism in Shashi Tharoor's Show Business

Mrs. Bhavana, Dr. K. Shibila
PRIST University, Research Scholar
PRIST University, Research Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Post modernism is a general term which is applied to literature, art, philosophy, architecture, fiction, culture and literary criticism. The present modernism is characterized by the ascendancy of science and explaining the world. It is often associated with identity, authority, certainty, difference, separation, textually and skepticism. Shashi Tharoor has successfully brought post modernism features in all his novels. Show Business is the story of a Bollywood superstar's life and experience of the Indian film industry and the Indian Parliament. Author's extended use of satire in the story has helped to bring out the funny, clever and political realities. Ashok discovers popularity and fame in Bollywood does not automatically translate into success in politics. Ashok is partly responsible for money-laundering scandal associated with his Swiss bank account. While shooting for a movie, Ashok is badly injured. In vain, he never recovers.

Show Business is not only a clever treatise on the distracting entertainments produced by the Hindi film industry. It is used as a postmodern code by the author and the contemporary popular myths created by it. It is a profound study of the lives of those who constitute this glamorous section of the society. The author exemplifies the leaders who never hesitate to betray their own country. This novel interrogates the rectitude of the politicians of free India.

INTRODUCTION

Post modernism is a general term which is applied to literature, art, philosophy, architecture, fiction, culture and literary criticism. Post modernism is largely a reaction to the scientific or objective efforts to explain reality. The term post modernism is first used around the 1870's in various areas as a general theory of a historical movement.

The present modernism is characterized by the ascendancy of science and explaining the world. It is often associated with identity, authority, certainty, difference, separation, textually and skepticism. Shashi Tharoor has successfully brought post modernism features in all his novels.

Show Business is the story of a Bollywood superstar's life and experience of the Indian film industry and the Indian Parliament. Author's extended use of satire in the story has helped to bring out the funny, clever and political realities. This novel is treated at two levels– the political and the real level.

Ashok Banjara introduces himself as a nervous, embarrassed and nondescript actor, shooting for Musafir, his first film. As a romantic hero, he performs the role of chasing the heroine, ducks, and dances. The scene does not end successfully. The shooting for a day ends with the hero's discovery of the famous bosom of the heroine. It satirically exposes the false celluloid world of the Bollywood.

Ashok has got instant success in the film industry with his second film, Godambo. Ashok is having a high intellectual reputation of dashing matinee idol virtually overnight "Long shot in slow motion, of baldy plummeting unceremoniously to his wet face, punctuated by a long, plaintive, despairing scream." (SB 22) He moves from one success to another. He marries Maya, his co-star. She is an excellent actress. He fathers a set of triplets.

His professional career is filled with the lacking interest, meaningless and messages decorated by shallow verse. His growing success acquires a lot of illegal wealth. Ashok keeps distances from his family. His

journey to name and fame satisfies his lust for money. Soon he becomes the megastar of the Indian film industry. He belongs to a political family. So he is persuaded to forsake his reel world and encase his popularity by entering politics.

Ashok's father is an honest but a junior minister in the government. The Minister of state has forced him to give his seat to his son. It is only a disillusion for the father, Kulbhushan Banjara and for his younger brother, Ashwin. Ashwin has worked hard in the father's constituency. He expects to inherit his father in politics. "All gone, and you don't even know Why? It was just another part of a story. You thought you didn't need to understand. But on this shift Ashokbhai, somebody gave you the wrong line." (SB 243) But Ashok is eager to accept the party's proposal. He does not care about its effect on his father and brother. Ashwin's mum blames Ashok. Ashok puts an end to the political aspirations of his father and brother. It is the beginning of the end of Ashok's reel career. Ashok makes an appalling film, *Mechanic*. But the film turns into his first flop. "Ashok is an automobile mechanic in Bombay, living in a slum working in a garage repairing the cars of the rich and powerful" (SB 224).

Ashok discovers popularity and fame in Bollywood does not automatically translate into success in politics. "Ashok Banjara was brought to win a seat, not to run affairs of government. Obviously a politician of no consequence, who couldn't possibly have any connection to a major nation transaction." (SB) Later, Ashok is partly responsible for money-laundering scandal associated with his Swiss bank account.

The scandal has destroyed his fortune and Ashok seeks work again. In desperation, he agrees to make his religious film, playing the role God Kalki. "It was that Swiss bank thing that early pissed me off. Why? Why did you need it? You wandered into politics and picked up the prevailing mores, but just as you did in films, you picked up worse of them" (SB 247).

While shooting the movie, Ashok's flaming sword causes a terrible accident. Many are fatally burnt alive. Ashok lies in the town's hospital. He is badly injured. His family members and friends visit him. He cannot react.

At the same time, thousands of fans of the megastar come from different parts of the country. "There are prayer meetings at street corners, Ashok; the louts are taking time off from eve-teasing to pray for health; little boys are neglecting their homework to ask Heaven to intercede on your behalf" (SB 250). They all stand outside the hospital and pray for his recovery. But it vain, Ashok never recovers. Ashok Banjara has everything as a film star profession provides.

On the other hand, political stint not only breaks the monotony of the novel's concerns but allows the author to unravel the complexities of India's social fabric. Its economic realities and the political experiences are in equal measure.

Tharoor not only provides the analysis of India's film industry through *Show Business*. The worlds of politics and film in this novel emerge as a powerful satire with humor and irony. The comic and satirical rendition of India's fictional and political realities is a powerful demonstration of the role of the success in the real world of Indian politics and the reel world of film industry. He is brilliantly using the postmodern techniques of parody and pastiche.

Tharoor makes abundant use of pastiche in *Show Business*. He portrays the social, political and cultural surroundings of the subcontinent characterized by the hypocrisy dominating its Mumbai based films and its Delhi based policy. The cinema based metaphor is a source of pastiche in *Show Business*. "There are actors in Bollywood who pay their taxes, surely, and there are, even It sounds like an oxymoron, honest politicians." (SB 247) *Show Business* highlights the perverted outlook and attitude of the present day Indian politician affecting the country's governance.

He underlines the idealized Indian politics of Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru, only a few decades after the end of colonialism. "Just like the heroes of our national movement, the men inspired by the Mahatma." (SB 121) Tharoor explains the co-existence of law breakers and law makers in his decolonized and debilitated motherland.

Tharoor's politicians vandalize the social and legal fabric. It is clearly enunciated by him in the confessional monologue of Kulbhushan Banjara. Tharoor endeavors to show that the natives of the Indian subcontinent have experienced emotions of joy and victory. After the end of the British rule in their country, it has not taken time for their nationalistic favour to become a more self-oriented one.

The author elucidates that the pride and joy are short lived. Kulbhushan Banjara equates and draws a parallel between his own profession of a politician and that of this actor son, Ashok. Kulbhushan Banjara belongs to the corrupt class. He exemplifies the self-oriented Indian polity of the post-colonial era that relegates the nation. Tharoor has brought every single politician and leader of free India to the Centre. The leaders are busy emphasizing their personal selves. The entire purpose of Indian polity is defeated. Tharoor expresses a pathetic fall of the country's democratic set up which has reduced to an electoral game of victory and defeat.

Tharoor represents corrupt leaders like Sugriva Sharma. He also portrays leaders like Kulbhushan Banjara who have learned with time to work for the wellbeing of the people.

Ashok is unable to hide his irritation because of the demands of his new profession. He is helped by this brother Ashwin. He deglamorizes the image of his brother in order to recreate his image as a representative of the common masses.

The author exemplifies the leaders who never hesitate to betray their own country. The unexpected inclusion of a Guru indicates how Indian politicians lack far sightedness and realism. It demonstrates how superstition is governing Indian politics.

Show Business is not only a clever treatise on the distracting entertainments produced by the Hindi film industry. It is used as a postmodern code by the author and the contemporary popular myths created by it. It is a profound study of the lives of those who constitute this glamorous section of the society. This novel interrogates the rectitude of the politicians of free India.