

**MIGRATION FOR SURVIVAL IN THE NOVELS
OF AMITAV GHOSH**

THESIS

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By

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the thesis entitled, “**MIGRATION FOR SURVIVAL IN THE NOVELS OF AMITAV GHOSH**” revised and resubmitted to the St.Peter’s University, for the award of Degree of Doctor of Philosophy is the record of research work done by the candidate **P. SAUMINI (Regn. No. SP13END001)** under my guidance and that the thesis has not formed previously the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other similar titles.

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DECLARATION

Certified that the thesis entitled “**MIGRATION FOR SURVIVAL IN THE NOVELS OF AMITAV GHOSH**” is the bonafide record of independent work done by me under the supervision of **Dr.A.K. POLSON**. Certified further that the work reported herein does not form part of any other thesis or dissertation on the basis of which a degree or award was conferred earlier.

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ABSTRACT

The present thesis is a venture to explore the journey of refugees on the post colonial theme of the meaning of home and the plight of homelessness, which Amitav Ghosh delineates in his novels, the concept of freedom, the agonizing stories and the impossible decisions that migrants have to make as they head toward what they believe is a better life. The fictions of Amitav Ghosh are marked by extreme themes that go side by side with post colonialism. The introductory chapter discusses the history, growth and development of Indian English Literature from 1880 down to the present day. It also traces Amitav Ghosh's biography and a descriptive chronological examination of his works and is an endeavor at placing Amitav Ghosh in Modern Indian English Literary world. "Victimization and Alienation in *The Circle of Reason*" picturises a saga of flight and pursuit, this novel chronicles the adventures of Alu, a young master weaver who is wrongly suspected of being a terrorist is chased from Bengal to Bombay and on through the Persian Gulf to North Africa by a bird watching Police Inspector.

"An Eternal Quest for Freedom in *The Shadow Lines*" deals with partition and immigration and also explores man's eternal quest for freedom. Historical events have provided Ghosh with raw materials against which he studies the historical truth, the meaning of nationalism and political freedom, in the modern world. This novel builds up its critique of cultural borders upon the notion of universal humanity. "A Universal Struggle for Survival in *The Glass Palace*" records the historical events in three countries – Burma, Malaya and India. A whole century of colonial rule of these countries is portrayed from Anglo Burmese war of 1885; to the world wars up to the age of cyber revolution and this bring together history fiction and autobiographical records along with memoirs. Ghosh is a great humanist, raises his powerful voice against oppression and tyranny through this novel. He is against the domination of man by man at all levels – political, military and economic.

“Plight of Aborigines in *The Hungry Tide*” depicts the unfulfilled hopes and aspirations of the post war and post partition subaltern classes of the sub-continent. The problems which are delineated in this novel are the post war aesthetics of the post colonial migration and resettlement of refugees and orphans. Ghosh’s major concern in this novel is to universalize subaltern history. It is a part of a daily struggle of each and every inhabitants of the island; the misery, suffering and exploitation has been their history, their destiny and since ages they wandered from place to place in search of shelter.

“Subaltern consciousness in the *Sea Of Poppies*” explores the problem of alienation, migration and existential crisis in the life of unprivileged class of society. The voice of subalterns, their struggle and sacrifices which went unnoticed in the annals of the history began to get a prominent voice in this fiction of Amitav Ghosh in a different way. Ghosh exposes the dilapidating plight of women in ancient and colonial India who are subjected to suffer numerous persecutions at the hands of men who have been treating women only an object of quenching carnal desire and house hold maid servants.

The “Summing Up” deals with the epic themes of travel and diaspora, history and memory, political struggle and communal violence, love and loss, while all the time crossing the generic boundaries between anthropology and art work. This chapter also explores the writings of Amitav Ghosh in the light of the innovative narrative strategies that he has experienced in his novels. He asks many questions through his novels and leaves them for the readers to answer.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SOP	-	Sea Of Poppies
TCC	-	The Calcutta Chromosome
TCR	-	The Circle of Reason
TGP	-	The Glass Palace
THT	-	The Hungry Tide
TSL	-	The Shadow Lines

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

English Literature produced in England from the introduction of old English by Anglo-Saxons in the 5th Century to the present. The works of those Irish and Scottish authors are clearly identified with English life and letters and are also considered a part of English literature. The term “Indo-Anglian” is used to denote original literary creation in the English language by Indians. Today there are a large number of educated Indians who use the English language as a medium of the creative exploration and expression of their experience of life. Their writing has now developed into a substantial body of literature in its own right and it is this literature which is referred to as Indo-Anglian Literature.

The history of English language and literature in India starts with the advent of East India Company in India in 1600. It all started in the summer of 1608 when the great Mughal emperor Salim Jahangir welcomed Captain William Hawkins, the commander of the British Naval expedition. It was India's first serious attempt to establish relationship with the English man and English language. Jahangir later allowed Britain to open a permanent port and factory on the request of the King James IVth, who sent his ambassador Sir Thomas Roe in the court of Jahangir. In the beginning, the aim of East India Company was to develop its trade and commerce in Indian soil, but after sometime its aim turned into passionate ambition to establish its own rule in India in the second half of the 18th century. The contemporary condition in the form of the disintegration of Mughal Empire and the struggles of various Indian kings among themselves assisted the purpose of the company in their direction. A British Poet Rudyard Kipling rightly tells the tale of British advent in India in these words:

Once, two hundred years ago, the trade came
 Meek and tame.
 Where his timid foot halted, there he stayed,
 Till mere trade
 Grew to Empire,
 And he sent his armies forth
 South and North,
 Till the country from Peshawar to Ceylon
 Was his own. (qtd.in.kumar 2)

In the second half of the 18th century, the rule of East India Company was established marginally in the eastern and southern peninsula. According to the scholars, the role of English language was extremely important. The establishment of British Empire in India was regarded as the beginning of Indian renaissance. Its effect was manifold. The suppression and exploitation of Indians in the hands of the British people compelled them to understand the meaning of slavery in Western terms. Secondly, the wide range of readings of the Western intellectual, philosophical and psychological works made them quite acquainted with the meaning of liberty and freedom. That is why, in the beginning of 19th century, India noticed the arrival of renaissance through the Western experience, although it is quite different from its origin as a great revolutionary Sir Aurobindo realized:

The Indian renaissance was less like the European one and more like the Celtic movement in Ireland, the attempt of a reawakened national spirit to find a new impulse of self expression which shall give the spiritual force for a great reshaping and rebuilding. (qtd. in. kumar 2)

It is generally supposed that the study of English was imposed upon Indians by Lord Macaulay with the sole purpose of serving the ends of the British administration in India. It is said that he wanted to make India a

Cultural Colony of England and to produce an army of English knowing clerks. Macaulay's 'Minutes' on Education is a landmark in the history of English education in India. In the 'Minutes' Macaulay advocated the cause of English and said, "We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue. We must teach them some foreign language. In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East." In his task, Macaulay was helped by Christian missionaries, who founded schools and published grammar books and dictionaries, by the English mercantile community, and by the educated Indian's and enlightened reformers.

The study of English and Western science on the whole proved very fruitful. It developed a scientific and rational approach to life, and educated Indians could shake off much of their conservatism and narrowness of outlook. Contact with English language and literature was fruitful to the regional languages, as it led to the growth and development of creative literature in these tongues. If even today, these languages are deficient in science and technology, it is because English educated young men have neglected them, and it is because of the lack of demand for scientific books in these languages. It was the dissemination of English that led to the upsurge of nationalism and the Indian Renaissance of 19th century.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the first Indian to write in English. He could speak and write English fluently and forcefully as it clearly brought out by his works on religion, *The Percepts of Jesus*, and *The Guide to Peace and Happiness*. Kesub Chandra Sen, Dwarka Nath Tagore and their Brahmo friends were other social reformers who used English prose effectively for communication of their ideas. Henry Derozio's volume of Poems was published in 1823 and Kashirprasad Ghosh published his volume

of poetry entitled *The Shair and the Other Poems* in 1830. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee became the first Indian writer of a novel in English. He made his mark with *Rajamohan's Wife* published in 1864. *One Thousand and One Nights* by S.K. Ghosh and *Indian Detective Stories* by S.B. Bannerjee are other works of prose fiction in English from Indian hands. Mention may also be made by Toru Dutt's novel called *Bianca or The Young Spanish Maiden*, which was published after her death by her father in the columns of the *Bengali Magazine*. Ramesh Chandra Dutt wrote many novels in Bengali and two of them were translated into English by the novelist himself. These are *The Slave Girl of Agra* and the *Lake of Palms*.

The Indian drama, like the novel and the short story was the result of the impact of English studies. The first Indian play in English *The Persecuted* was written in 1832. But the solid contribution to Indian drama in English upto date is that of Tagore and Shri Aurobindo Ghosh.

Michael Madhusudhan Dutt was a Bengali poet of talent whose one ambition in life was to win recognition as a writer of English verse. He has left behind two volumes of poetry *Vision of the Past* (1848) and *The Captive Ladie* (1849). Shoshec Chander Dutt is another early poet who in his *A Vision of Sumeru and Other Poems* tried to achieve Indianness. The Indian gods like Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are brought in but there are also constant references to Christian and Greek Mythology. B.M. Malabari is a much greater writer than Shoshee Dutt and Greece Chunder. In his collection of verse entitled *The Indian Muse in English Garb* he frequently – deals with the blessing of the British rule.

Another great poet at the turn of the century is Manmohan Ghosh. *His Love songs and Elegies* was published in 1898, and his *Songs of Love and Death* in 1926. It is in the poetry of Toru Dutt that the soul of India is really revealed. She began her poetic career with *A sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*

written when she was only nineteen years of age, though published much later after her death. Toru's chief legacy to posterity is her verse collection *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1883) which includes the ancient Hindu stories of Savitri, Sita, Prahalad, Dhruva etc. The poems appeal to the primary emotions of love, filial piety, devotion, gratitude etc. It is for the first time that we find purely Indian themes being treated in English against a purely Indian background. This verse collection is an important landmark in the history of Indo-Anglian Literature.

It is Sarojini Naidu who carries forward the task left incomplete by the early death of Toru Dutt, that of interpreting the soul of India to the West and creating an authentic Indian atmosphere. She achieves signal success in the handling of Indian imagery and the expression of Indian personality. Her bulk of Poetry in *The Golden Threshold*, *The Bird of Time* and *The Broken Wing* is Indian in spirit, thought, emotion and imagery. *The Festival of Serpents* and *Leili* are two examples of the Hindu accent of Sarojini's poetry.

Rabindranath Tagore is the greatest of the Indians writing in English. His fame as a poet in English rests chiefly on his *The Gitanjali* which is "transcreation" of the Bengali original. It was with this work that he achieved international fame and recognition, and was awarded the Nobel prize for Literature. Aurobindo Ghosh is another great Indo-Anglian poet, prophet and seer who started his career at the turn of the century and continued to write well into the 20th century. His poems like *Urvashi*, *Love and Death*, *Savithri* are Hindu in setting, sentiment and expression.

The early pioneering works of Indo-Anglian fiction were social, historical, detective and romantic. Indo Anglian fiction was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. The period between and after the Freedom struggle has been the most fertile period. Anand brought to India the new

technique of the stream-of-consciousness. Raja Rao adopted the autobiographical form of narration. Plot and characterization were also enriched. There was larger quantity and better quality. We have the social, the rural, the detective, the historical, and the romantic type of novel. The contribution of K.S. Venkataramani, Shankar Ram, S.Nagarajan, Kumar Guru, A.S.P.Ayyar, S.K. Chettur, G.V. Desani are notable. But the credit of bringing a name and reputation to Indo-Anglian fiction goes to a few contemporary writers such as Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K.Narayan and Nirad Chaudhuri. They are the four wheels of Indo-Anglian fiction. Other luminaries who have enriched the Indo-Anglian fiction are Khwaja Ahamed, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandeya, Anita Desai, Mrs.R.Prawer Jhabavala, Lumber Mascarenhas, Mrs.Vimala Raina, Khuswant Singh and others.

In spite of diversity in themes and techniques, the Indo-Anglian fiction has some common features, namely, the presentation of a personal narrative against the background of modern Indian history, the conflict of values between the family and the individual, and the awareness of social change. The Indo-Anglian writers of fiction write with an eye and hope on the Western readers. That is why in Indo-Anglian novels there are Sadhus, Fakirs, Caves, Temples, Vedanta, Gandhi, Rajahs and Nawabs etc. that is to say, there are subjects that interest the Western audience. They represent essentially the western idea of India. But at the same time there are elements of Indianness, Nationalism and Patriotism, glorification of India's past and sympathy for the teeming millions of the country, etc., speak of the Eastern orientation.

The achievement of Independence is an historic watershed, and the restriction imposed by confining the study of the novels of the period after independence is not only chronological but also thematic, resulting in the

exclusion, sometimes made reluctantly, of the novels dealing with pre-independence themes, regardless of the fact that they were written after the achievement of freedom. The pre-independence political novels largely deal with the freedom struggle under the saintly but dynamic leadership of Gandhiji, the stooges of the empire, the miseries of the poor and the downtrodden and the communal divide fostered by the Government which ultimately succeeded in partitioning the country. In general, it is largely after independence that we find Indian English political fiction blossoming out in a diversity of themes and techniques.

The celebrated unity of Indian literature is demonstrated by its political stance as much as by its profound philosophy. The Indian political literature is divisible into two periods, the dividing line being the achievement of independence in 1947, though a few novels on pre-1947 themes continued to be written even in the post-1947 period. The pain of partition and the communal riots that erupted was a spine chilling episode in Indian history which left its impression among every strata of the society be it the politicians or the intellectuals. The more or less common themes running through them are the lives and miseries of the poor and their exploitation by the higher classes and British rulers and industrialists, generally British, the need for communal harmony, their aspiration for freedom and Gandhian non-violent struggle for freedom, even though sometimes totally self-destructive as in *Kanthapura*. The great Mahatma felt helpless and forgot his all powerful weapons of Satyagraha and hunger strike. In any case, the cloudy dawn of independence did come, but it came with the immediate tryst with the destiny of shrieks of suffering and streams of blood much more than would have been shed in a civil war. Lamentably, the partition was not on any ideological or economic grounds but on the most irrational ones of religion, for crores of Muslims who had voted for

Pakistan remained in India while Pakistan was practically cleansed of all Hindus.

The event that naturally burst upon the novelists' attention after independence – was the partition, the rumblings of which had already been heard by them in the raiders' attack on Kashmir backed by Pakistani army. The first important novel dealing in details with the theme of partition is Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*. He tells us that there was the loss of all values and the naked dance of man's animality was displayed during the days of unrestrained violence caused by the partition of the country. His recent novel *Delhi* has a few pages giving an account of the abduction of Hindu girls by Muslims in the newly created Pakistan. Mulk Raj Anand's *Death of a Hero* has portrayed the invasion of Kashmir by Pakistani raiders, through the story of Maqbool Sherwani, a nationalist who belonged to real life, sticks to his nationalist views even at the cost of his life. Manohar Malgonkar has tackled the theme of Partition in entirely different ways in two of his novels, *Distant Drum* and *A Bend in the Ganges*.

Another partition novel which has deservedly got universal acclaim is Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, the title which can be treated as ironical, for the independence from foreign rule was accompanied by a blood-bath on both sides of India – Pakistan border. Raj Gill's *The Rape*, Attia Hosain's novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, Gurucharan Das's *A Fine Family*, have a special place among partition novels in English.

Salman Rushdie could not have written directly about the partition as an event witnessed by the protagonist of his *Midnight's Children*, for Saleem Sinai is born at the precise hour of India's independence and *Shame* is not about the partition but about Pakistan, the bitter fruit of the partition. In Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* the evocative memories of the

protagonist cover a wide range of domestic, social and political life in Bengal before and after partition.

During the late nineteen seventies a new breed of convent boarding-school educated and elite class of novelists and writers, started to emerge who forever had chalked out a plan to alter the map of post colonial Indian English Literature. It has a luxuriant growth in the post – 1980 period. It has an all round development, unprecedented in the literary, history of our country. The likes of Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor set the literature world on fire. To make an evaluation of Post modern Indian English Literature is not an easy task. It raises a number of questions regarding the date and the nature of the subject under discussion. It is the great trio Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao who wrote novels and stories, in the nineteen thirties and Nissim Ezekeil, Kamala Das, A.K. Ramanujam who wrote poetry in the sixties that have greatly contributed to the creation of a new literature in English in our country. Their creative effort got the critical sanction in the hands of critics like K.R.S.Iyengar, C.D. Narasimhaiah and a few others in the nineteen sixties.

The development of novel in English as a literary phenomenon took time because in the beginning Indian writers found themselves in difficulty to accommodate themselves to express their thoughts and feelings in this alien language. But within limited time they showed mastery over English although they did not fully express themselves in this. Meenakshi Mukherjee writes about the same problem faced by Indian English novelists.

Novels in English hardly ever provide us with the examples of self-reflexivity about the language they use, enclosed as they are generally within the cognitive and cultural limits of their linguistic medium. (qtd.in.kumar 5)

Indian English literature has luxuriant growth in the post – 1980 period. It has an all round development unprecedented in the literary history of our country. Indian English poets and fiction writers have won world-wide acclaim during nineteen eighties and afterwards. We can divide Indian English Literature from 1930s to the end of the 20th Century into two phases; Modernist and postmodernist: the former beginning with Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), and the latter beginning with Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and Nissim Ezekiel's *Latter Day Psalms* (1982). Important novelists, poets, short-story writers and playwrights in the post – 1980 period include the names of Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujam, Jayanta Mahapatra, Kamala Das, Shiv. K.Kumar, Keki N.Daruwalla, Dom Moraes, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Deshpande, Vikram Seth, Vikram Chandra, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Raj Kamal Jha, Ruskin Bond, Manoj Das, Hari Kunzru and a few others.

Indian English Writers in the nineteen eighties and after come under criticism for what the Bhasha literature critics call the lack of authenticity and Indian sensibility in their writings. Postmodern Indian English has come up age. It successfully meets the challenges of the Bhasha literature at home and postcolonial literature and Anglo-American Literatures abroad. Indian English Literature transcended 'the local' and transformed it into global. And that is, the hallmark of good literature. This brings to our mind Eliot's observation made in his essay, "The Three Provincialities":

True literature has something which can be appreciated by intelligent foreigners who have a reading knowledge of the language, and also something which can only be understood by the particular people living in the same place as the author.
(qtd.in.kumar Das 4)

Post modern Indian English has vindicated Eliot's observation in letter and spirit.

The luxuriant growth of Indian English poetry occurred in mid-seventies with the publication of R.Parthasarathy's ably chosen and edited anthology titled, *Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets* in 1976. This anthology can be said to have marked the beginning of postmodernism in Indian English poetry. This anthology was quickly followed by individual collection of poems such as Nissim Ezekiel's *Hymns in Darkness* (1976), A.K.Ramanujan's *Selected Poem* (1977), Keki.N.Daruwalla's *Crossing of Rivers* (1976), R.Parthasarathy's *Rough Passage* (1976), and Shiv.K.Kumar's *Subterfuges* (1977). Indian English Poetry won recognition both at home and abroad.

Sahitya Academi, New Delhi has honoured seven Indian English poets with its Annual Award in the post - 1980 period. They are Jayanta Mahapatra for *Relationship* in 1981, Nissim Ezekiel for *Latter-Day Psalm* in 1983, Keki.N. Daruwalla for *Keeper of the Dead* (1984), Kamala Das for *Collected Poems Vol. 1* in 1985, Shiv. K. Kumar for *Trap falls in the Sky* in 1987, Dom Moraes for *Serendip* in 1994 and A.K. Ramajujan for *collected Poems* in 1999.

Three playwrights who have given a new direction to Indian English drama in the post modern period are Girish Karnad, Nissim Ezekiel and Mahesh Dattani. Karnad sought into prominence with the publication of his two plays *Tughlaq* in 1972 and *Hayavadana* in 1975. In the nineties he has written three more plays titled *Naga-Mandala* (1990), *Tale-Danda* (1993) and *The Fire and the Rain* (1998).

Mahesh Dattani is the first Indian English playwright to win the Sahitya Akademi Award for his play *Final Solutions and Other Plays* for the year 1998. He writes about hijras, homosexuality and politics in present day society with confidence and fortitude. Homosexuality as a theme has been

dealt with two of Dattani's plays namely *Bravely Fought the Queen* and *A Muggy Night in Mumbai*.

Apart from all these three noted playwrights, some minor Indian English playwrights have also published their plays in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Vera Sharma's *Life is Like That* (1997), Derek Antao's *Give Us This Day Our Black Sheet* (1980), Gieve Patel's *Mister Behram* (1988), Dina Mehta's *Brides Are Not for Burning* (1993) and Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest* (1998) are some of the well-known plays in Indian English Literature.

The social realism that the postmodern Indian English novelists experience constitutes the world of bureaucracy, business, politics and cinema. The fact that the postmodern Indian English novel is metropolitan and elitist and that it is basically concerned with the upper class as well as the world of power, affluence and glamour is what makes it postcolonial in its hybrid state of a globalized form of discourse as well as postmodern in its attempt to fashion identities that transcend the provincial and traditional, and in its aspiration to reach out to a cosmopolitan and value-neutral apprehension of life.

The question of Indian identity in relation to the Indian English fiction has assumed special significance in the eighties and after in the context of a large number of writers emerging from outside India. Indian English novel had its luxuriant growth in the hands of Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth, Shashi Deshpande, and a few others in the nineteen eighties and after. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, a novel that won Booker's Booker Prize can be said to be the epoch-making book that has revolutionalized Indian English fiction in the postmodern period.

In the post - 1980 era love, sex and marriage or the failure of it, are some of the leading themes in Indian English novel. Shiv.K.Kumar's *A River with three Banks*, Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* is about match-making.

Upamanyu Chatterjee sought into prominence with the publication of his debut novel *English August: An Indian Story* (1992). He also published *The Last Burden* (1993) and *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* (2000). Shashi Tharoor is a major novelist in the post – 1980 period with his three novels such as *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), *Show Business* (1994) and *Riot* (2001) to his credit. Vikram Seth created history in more than one way. His first novel *The Golden Gate* (1986), for which he won the Sahitya Akademy Award for the year 1988. Seth's third novel, *An Equal Music* was published in 1999. Vikram Chandra who won Commonwealth prize for his book of short stories titled *Love and Longing in Bombay*, has a brilliant novel, *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995) to his credit.

The Magical Realism technique popularized by Salman Rushdie attracted a large number of novelists of the postmodern era such as Rukun Advani, Mukul Kesavan and Makarand Paranjape. *Beethoven Among the Cows* (1994) by Rukum Advani, *Looking Through Glass* (1995) by Mukul Kesavan, *The Narrator* (1995) by Makarand Paranjape, *An Angel in Pyjamas* (1996) by Tabish Khair, *Bombay Duck* (1990) by Farukh Dhondy, *The Memory of Elephants* (1988) and *Asylum, U.S.A.* (2000), both by Boman Desai are some of the important novels written in the technique of Magical realism.

Kiran Nagarkar own Sahity Akademi Award for his historical novel *Cuckold* for the year 2000. R.K.Narayan has published *The Tiger For Malgudi* (1983), *Talkativ Man* (1983), *The World of Nagaraj* (1990), and *Grand mother's Tale* (1992). Mulk Raj Anand published *The Bubble* (1984).

Little Plays of Mahatma Gandhi (1991) and *Nine Moods of Bharata: Novel of a Pilgrimage* (1998). Chetan Bagat is the author of best selling novels, *Five Point Someone* (2004), *The Three Mistakes of My Life* (2008), *2 States* (2009), *Revolution 2020* (2011), and *Half Girl Friend* (2014).

Important women Novelists who published their works in the postmodern period are Anita Desai, K Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapur, Gita Mehata, Shobha De, and Kamala Markandaya. The women novelists deal with the theme of love, marriage, loneliness and search for identity. With Arundhati Roy's Booker prize Award Winning novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997) Indian English novel has won International recognition.

Anitha Desai published a number of novels such as *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *The Village by the Sea: An Indian Family Story* (1982), *In Custody* (1984), *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), *Journey To Ithaca* (1995), and *Fasting, Feasting* (1999), in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Nayantara Sahgal published *Rich Like Us* (1985), *Plans For Departure* (1985) and *Mistaken Identity* (1988) are the novels about history, nationalism and contemporary life. Shashi Deshpande, the most accomplished women novelists of postmodern period published *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980), *If I Die Today* (1982), *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983), *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *That Long Silence* (1988), *The Binding Vine* (1993) and *Small Remedies* (2000). Shobha De's novels *Sisters* (1992) and *Snapshots* have contemporary relevance. Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* won the 2006 Man Booker Prize and National Book Critic Fiction award. Her first novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* was published in 1998. Anita Nair published *The Better Man* (2000), *Ladies Coupe* (2001) and *Keeper of The Light* in 2014.

Amitav Ghosh is indisputably one of the most important novelist and essayist today, full of promise, potentiality and magnificent achievement. A novelist with an extra ordinary sense of history and place, Ghosh locates an individual's drama in general, often uncontrollable, sweep of humanity's destiny and actions. From the Partition to colonial science to colonialism, Ghosh is interested in the ways in which the violence of history, geography and politics alters lives. His novels brim with interesting themes set against fascinating historical backdrops.

Amitav Ghosh today cheerfully – if humbly – bears numerous mantles of responsibility in the world of the book: anthropologist, sociologist, novelist, essayist, travel-writer, teacher and slips in and out of these veiled categories with admirable aplomb. (Khatri 83)

Ghosh was born in Calcutta on 11th July 1956 to Lieutenant Colonel Shailendranath Ghosh and his wife Anjali Ghosh. Though Shailendranath was initially in the army, he later joined the civil service, mostly attached to the foreign ministry. Ghosh grew up partly in Bangladesh, partly in India, Srilanka and Iran. From very early on, he was used to travel a lot and this was an experience which would later contribute immensely to his career as a writer. He went to school in Dhaka, in Sri Lanka and then at Doon school in Dehradun. He attended St.Stephen's College, Delhi University in 1976 and received a B.A. in History. He is an MA in sociology from the University in 1978. He received a diploma in Arabic from the Institute Bourguiba des Langues Vivantes, in Tunis, Tunisha, in 1979 and then a D.Phil. Ph.D in social Anthropology from (St. Edmund's Hall) Oxford University in 1982. As part of that course, in 1980 he went to Egypt to do field work in the village of Lataifa. He worked for a while as a journalist for *The Indian Express* newspaper in New Delhi. Since then he has been a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Social Sciences at Trivandrum, Kerala (1982-83), a Visiting Professor of Anthropology at the University of

Virginia (1988), the American University in Cairo (1994) and Columbia University (1994-97), and Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature at Queens College of the City University of New York (1999-2003). In the spring of 2004, he was a Visiting Professor in the department of English at Harvard University. He spends part of each year in Calcutta, but lives in New York with his wife Deborah Baker, an editor at Little Brown and Company and their children Leela and Nayan.

The novel according to Ghosh has been ‘vigorously international from the start’ born amidst cross cultural reading habits and imbibing its nutrients from an experimental cross breeding of ideas and styles. His family had hailed from eastern Bengal and migrated to Calcutta before the Partition cataclysms of 1947, the figure of the ‘refugee’ is one that has continued to inform his fiction throughout his career, most prominently in *The Circle of Reason* (1986), *The Shadow Lines* (1988) and *The Glass Palace* (2000). Other less forcibly displaced persons – economic migrants, travellers, students, researchers on field trips – populate his fictional and non-fictional work and constitute his central characters. Perhaps his early childhood accompanying his diplomat parents to their postings in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Iran may have attuned his sensibilities to the rewards of travel and its possibilities for a writer who is keen to examine the world from the perspective of the unsettled, or uprooted – possibilities that might offer insights unavailable to others. He has remarked that travelling is always in some way connected with his fictional work, and others have noted that Ghosh visualises movement as in some way fundamental to human experience, not necessarily seeing it as involving a physical journey but also as a potentiality that inhabits the consciousness of even those people often regarded as ‘settled’, such as peasants. Indeed much of his work challenges the assumption that human history is one of ‘settled’ population and stable cultures.

In the trajectory of history – as well as of historical fictions – we have always been concerned with the ‘other’. It is no doubt fitting in the age of an extravagant embracing of globalization, we may claim to have closed the gap between battling the other and straddling it; certainly, the legacy of post-colonial angst today appears to have settled into a potentially numbing acceptance of bi-or multi-cultural euphoria. Ghosh’s imagination is as necessarily diasporic as it is post-colonial, being a product of specific histories of the subcontinent in the twentieth century.

Crossing of frontiers – especially those of nationality, culture and language has increased all over the world including India. Though this is an old theme Ghosh gives it a new twist; several other modern Indian novelists have explored this theme, not so much in terms of whether the two can meet or not in terms of political and cultural consequence of the historical fact, that they have met, what is more, they have been looked at together for years in a colonized – colonizer relationship.

Amitav Ghosh maps the personal stories of men and women alongside the political histories of the whole of South and South-East Asia in his novels. He unfolds the Asian Saga with a totally Asian perspective. Public events of a turbulent and momentous century are recounted through the eye of private individuals caught in a multidimensional perspective, mirroring life, bringing out the innate nature of modern human beings who form the society. Ghosh’s novels have an irresistible cultural pre-occupation vigorously manifested with humanistic yearnings. Thereby a sense, for a typical quest for one’s identity which invariably has cultural moorings. The question of survival, existence and a sense of longingness to rise in this materialistic world is what Ghosh tries to communicate by making his protagonists move from one-country to another with his strong Indian cultural heritage.

Indira Bhatt and Indira Nithyanandam in their introduction to *Interpretation of The Shadow Lines* comment that history is always present in Ghosh's novels. They further add that "most of his novels use time in a non-linear, juxtaposing the past and the present". (qtd. in Khatri 85).

Amitav Ghosh has published eight major works, of which seven can be unproblematically classified as novels.

The Circle of Reason (1986) – His debut novel, is a huge ambitious novel with a crowd of characters and themes, set in a number of countries, India, Egypt and Algeria. It is an 'episodic' picaresque novel in three parts, linked only by a young boy with a potato shaped head called Alu, and a half-hearted young intelligence officer Jyothi Das. Alu is forced to run away from his village, because he is falsely accused of being a terrorist. His perigrinations take him to the Middle East, moving as he does from al-Gazira, a small Persian Gulf town to Cairo, the Sahara and finally to Algeria. The places in his novel are not imaginary lands but places that can be located on the maps of the world. The novel has three sections – first section 'Satwa' (Reason), the second section 'Rajas' (passion) and the third section 'Tamas' (Death).

The Shadow Lines (1988) – His second novel for which he got the Sahitya Akademi Award for the year 1989, is a good example of Magical Realism. The theme of the novel is restricted to the people of a very small cross section of an upper middle class Bengali family. The orthodox Bengali family is depicted at three stages – before partition, after partition and in recent times. The first part of the novel 'Going away' deals with the family's exit from Dhaka during the riot ridden days of the partition and the second part, 'Coming Home' deals with the Grand mother's futile attempt to rescue her only living uncle 'Jethamosai' from their ancestral home surrounded by muslim refugees who would become violent at times. Ghosh's originality

lies in his depiction of communal strife in Calcutta and Bangladesh. He seems to say that there is a very marginal difference between fiction and reality. The suggestion is that there is a shadow line between reality and imagination. And ‘reality’ is multifaceted.

In An Antique Land (1992) – This novel incorporates two narrative strands: a medieval narrative and a contemporary one. In the medieval narrative, Ghosh attempts to reconstruct the lives of a medieval slave named Bomma and his Patron, Ben Yiju, a Tunisian Jewish merchant who lived in the 12th Century and moved between different parts of the orient. As Ghosh reconstructs the lives of these two medieval characters, he conjures up a medieval, cosmopolitan world where people moved between different parts of the region without the troublesome procedures of visas and checkpoints. The region was not yet divided by borders that were later carved by colonialism. Unlike mainstream historiography, Ghosh’s text represents subalterns as active agents in shaping their world and gives them a voice.

Ghosh’s achievement, like that any gifted historical novelist, lies in his ability to extract from actual events a set of characters whose fictional identity is camouflaged by the plausible interaction with their environment and by their ability to appeal to the reader. Unifying the two sets is the thread of historicity – a post-colonialist’s interpretation of the events encompassing eight centuries starting with the twelfth and ending with the operational Desert storm. (Das 59).

The Calcutta Chromosome (1996). This novel has been described as a kind of mystery thriller. It brings together three searches; the first is that of an Egyptian Clerk, Antar, working alone in a New York apartment in the early years of the 21st century to trace the adventures of L.Murugan, who disappeared in Calcutta in 1995; the second pertains to Murugan’s obsession with the missing links in the history of malaria research; the third search is that of Urmila Roy, a journalist in Calcutta in 1995 who is searching the

works of Phulboni, a writer who produced a strange cycle of Lakan stories that he wrote in 1930s but suppressed thereafter. It is an attempt to rewrite the story of Ronald Ross's discovery of the life cycle of malaria mosquito and how it causes the disease to human beings.

This novel is an amazing amalgam of the theory of existentialism with an Indian – cultural perspective. It is through his complex plotting that he tries to highlight the thoughts of a typical Indian, regional Culcuttan thoughts, society and culture of a person outside his homeland. He makes Mangala, a sweeper woman the protagonist of the novel, He highlights women's problems and carves out a rightful place for them in the society.

The Glass Palace (2000) – is a novel about the rise and fall of imperial powers in the twentieth century. He focuses on the familial, commercial and cultural links that connect the Indian diaspora in South East Asia, and the novel's centre of gravity lies in Burma. The narrative concerns itself mostly with the fortunes of three families: the deposed King of Burma and his retinue of servants, one of whom marries a wealthy timber merchant called Rajkumar who had once been a destitute Bengali Orphan in Mandalay, the King's capital, at the time of his expulsion by the British; and the family of Saya John, a Malay Christian and Rajkumar's mentor. The Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia throws everything into turmoil. Family members are cut off from each other, fortunes are lost, and a member of them perish in a variety of war-related incidents. The novel tracks the ties of family and friendship across a continent and over four generations.

The Hungry Tide (2004) – In this novel, the theme of immigration, sometimes voluntary and sometimes forced, along with its bitter/sweet experiences, runs through more incidents in the core of the novel – the ruthless suppression and massacre of East Pakistani refugees who had run away from the Dandakaranya refugee camps to Morichjhampias they felt

that the latter region would provide them with familiar environs and therefore a better life. Ghosh dramatizes the last phase of the refugee struggle in the Sunderbans. But life had been difficult long before ever since their forced migration to India.

Sea Of Poppies (2008) – In this ambitious novel, Amitav Ghosh attempts to fill in the blanks left by the archives. Set partly in Bengal, the scene of Grierson’s inquiry and drawing on accounts the English left, it opens in 1838 on the eve of the Opium Wars. A former slave ship called the Ibis has been refitted to transport coolies from Calcutta to the sugar estates of Mauritius and for hundreds of pages we watch as its crew and passengers are slowly assembled until it finally gets on its way. The first in a projected trilogy, *Sea Of Poppies* is big and baggy, a self-styled epic with colossal themes and almost a dozen major characters, including the son of an American slave, the orphaned daughter of French Botanist and an Anglophile raja. But majority on board are Indian Peasants from the opium – producing countryside, forced by famine or scandal to seek a new life elsewhere.

River of Smoke (2011). Throughout his work Ghosh writes with a global perspective, evident not only in the range of locations and variety of characters he depicts, but also in his insistence on connections that cross presumed boundaries. At the beginning of *River of Smoke*, the second volume in Ibis trilogy, Neel the deported Raja whose story begins in Ghosh’s novel *Sea Of Poppies*, remarks of a hurricane that it is “looking for a new possibilities, creating fresh beginnings, rewriting destinies and throwing together people who would never have met”. This passage is vintage Ghosh, aware simultaneously of the destructive and constructive forces that bind people and histories together. Throughout *River of Smoke*, characters’ path cross, sometimes fleetingly and at other times in intricate and life changing ways, as Ghosh probes the human – frailty and fortitude of individuals caught up in the opium trade to China.

Though primarily known as a novelist, Amitav Ghosh has to his credit, a whole range of non-fictional works, which include academic articles, travelogues, reportage, journalism and criticism. As J.C.Hawley rightly points out:

many of these pieces share in common the author's abiding concern for the impact of broad historical movements of individual caught up in events beyond their control, the importance of connections between the past and the present, and the desirability of finding avenues for communication that obviate nationalistic manias. (Hawley 19).

It is unusual for a novelist to produce as rich a body of essays as Amitav Ghosh has. He has an interest in reaching different audience – some prefer reading fiction, others prefer shorter essays on less obviously 'imagined' topics. Yet even in these more prosaic works Ghosh typically tells one story after another, eliciting from readers a sense of engagement that might otherwise be missing. We will start our discussion of Ghosh by looking at these essays in one extended sweep, since they are usually looked at only in passing, as a support for discussions of his fiction.

Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma (1998). This book is a collection of three essays previously published in journals. 'Dancing in Cambodia' from *Granta 44* (summer of 1993) 'Stories in Stones' from *The Observer Magazine*, 16 January, 1994 and *At Large in Burma*', previously published in *The New Yorker* on 12 August, 1996. The present essay is a study of the Cambodian history of the twentieth century and the attempt on the part of the narrator, to build an alternative narrative of the period by foregrounding unrecorded stories from the lives of ordinary people. *Dancing in Cambodia* interweaves two historical encounters. The first is the visit to Marseilles in June of 1906 of King Sisowath of Cambodia and a troupe of nearly a hundred classical dancers and musicians from the royal palace at Phnom Penh. The second is Ghosh's visit to Cambodia in January of 1993 in

search of Polpot's sister-in-law, who was said to be one of the country's greatest dancers – infact, a natural treasure. Written in the form of a travelogue, the essay traces the changing political history of the country from colonial times till the devastating Pol Pot regime (1975-79). The essay presents the country's traditional dance form as the emblem of its political identity.

Count Down – This essay is the product of much editing and condensing of a large body of interviews and interactions. Ghosh had had in the aftermath of the Pokhran tests on 11-12 May 1998, followed by the Chagai tests on 28 and 30 May 1998. The opinion - quest spanned the intelligentsia of India, Pakistan and even Nepal, highlighting the views of not less than eighteen persons whose voices mattered. Thus, *Countdown* may conveniently be called a travelogue, which Ghosh wrote in order to expose his readers to an entire range of opinions about current affairs in the sub-continent – he travelled from India to Pakistan and Nepal, returning to India, across borders, seeking opinions. His chosen form for *Countdown* was a collage, in thirteen sections, of a variety of viewpoints on the socio-political scenario in the Indian sub-continent, which were directly and indirectly related to the blasts of May 1998.

The Imam and the Indian (2002) – This is a collection of eighteen prose pieces of various lengths and on a wide variety of subjects, previously published in journals. The Theme of the tendency towards othering, perverted human thought and action and thus dehumanising the human race, dominates some of Amitav Ghosh's essays in his collection of non-fictional prose work entitled *The Imam And The Indian*. The earliest essay was written in 1985, and the next essay was published in 2002. Ghosh suggests that “the first five narratives were all written in short and intensely focused

periods of concentration. The piece that gives this collection its overall title, *The Imam and The Indian* was published in Granta in 1986.

Incendiary Circumstances (2005) - Amitav Ghosh, in his preface to the book *Incendiary Circumstances* (2005), states that the essays collected in the book were written over a period of twenty years and have been gathered together in this volume as they share certain common issues and themes. The essays, as the title of the book suggests, chronicle the violence and turmoil of our times. This eclectic collection of essays can be categorised as primarily dealing with Ghosh's social and literary concerns where one merges with and informs the other. This essay explores the various types of violence that Ghosh chronicles in this anthology and attempts to outline the author's concern regarding the question of writing about violence without valorising it.

Violence in South and Southeast Asia has always been an issue that deeply concerns Ghosh. This is the violence that has marked his growing up and coming of age and it is the same violence which his volition as a writer seeks to confront and find answers to. Violence in the modern world has become an integral part of life from which we cannot escape. It is an aspect of life that is indeterminate and often incomprehensible. The violence of riots, terrorist activities, state-sponsored ethnic cleansing, forced migration, arms race and racial hatred – these are all issues that an individual finds hard to grapple and come to terms with.

Collective and individual violence in the modern age, in the forms of various types of killings (for example, the 9/11 attacks, the Mumbai attacks, the separatist movements throughout the world, the riots of Partition, the riots of 1984, etc.) are often organized on such a devastating scale in order to draw the attention of a certain section of people or the state – that it supersedes our imagination. Violence as a phenomenon thus seeks to

achieve its aim by taking on the appearance of a spectacle. Ghosh is concerned with the evolution of violence, as he writes in his essay, “The Greatest Sorrow”:

if that which mesmerized us yesterday ceases to interest us today, then it follows that the act which will next claim our attention will be even more horrific, ever more resistant to yesterday’s imagination, than the last their purpose is horror itself. (qtd. in. Ghosh.T.K 258)

Amitav Ghosh, throughout his career he has sought to locate marginal, lost, or suppressed stories from the ‘other’ pasts that have yielded to the historical necessity posited by the meta-narrative of History – those barely discernible traces that ordinary people leave upon the world. It is worth noting that each of his major works direct their narrative energy toward ‘marginal’ or unofficial episodes in the historical record. In *The Circle of Reason*, Ghosh explores the histories of science and pseudoscience and their deployment in the colonial milieu: in *The Shadow Lines*, he examines the ways in which nation-states in the subcontinent are compelled to ‘forget’, the communal riots that disrupt their ‘official’, state – centred histories, which sit like palimpsests above other histories of community, identity and belonging; in *In an Antique Land*, Ghosh attempts to recover the forgotten history of the medieval Indian Ocean trade, that world of accommodation that has been obscured by the ‘the map of modern knowledge’, in order to challenge the exclusive national identities that make the very possibility of such a history unthinkable – once again, the figure of the palimpsest emerges here as a highly significant metaphor in Ghosh’s writing, one that alludes to the sly allegory on the intercourse between power and the writing of history; in *The Calcutta Chromosome*, Ghosh mischievously deconstructs once more the history of modern science by rewriting an alternative history in such a manner as to reinscribe the excised contributions of non-western knowledge systems and colonized peoples; *The*

Glass Palace focuses on two overlooked episodes during the Second World War, which is perhaps the most extensively researched and represented period in history; the history of Indian National Army in Malaya, and the Forgotten Long March of Indian refugees from Burma in 1941. The refugees are also the centre of attraction in his next novel *The Hungry Tide*, as he recalls a marginalized episode in the coercive history of the modern post-colonial Indian state, namely the Morichjhapi incident;

Ghosh's writing reflects the recent concern of anthropologists with the porosity of cultural boundaries. As Renato Rosaldo argues

In contrast with the classical view, which posits culture as a self-contained whole made up of coherent patterns, culture can arguably be conceived as a more porous array of intersections where distinct processes cross from within and beyond its borders. (Khair 10)

The characters in Ghosh's novels do not occupy discreet cultures, but 'dwell in travel' in cultural spaces that flow across borders – the shadow lines drawn around modern nation states. Yet, like Edward Said's *Orientalism*, these novels also remain bound up in the notion of a universal humanity; and like the otherwise very different work of Homi. K. Bhabha, they postulate a global theory of the colonial subject.

Like several postcolonialists Ghosh shares concern with and provides the space for or re-instates the unrecorded, subaltern, silenced, othered, voiceless or those who are overlooked by history and who are swallowed up by the powerful. In the interview with Hawley, Ghosh consents "I have been deeply influenced by the ideas of the subaltern studies group. I think I share some of the concerns of the Subaltern Studies group because I am from the same milieu as many of the group members" (Hawley 12). Ghosh shows an abiding interest in marginalized and silenced individuals, for instance, Alu and series of characters in *The Circle of Reason*, a mysterious urchin living

in an Indian railway station and a lab assistant Mangala in *The Calcutta Chromosome*, an obscure slave in and his master in *In An Antique Land*, an overlooked fisherman Fokir in *The Hungry Tide*, and an orphan Rajkumar in *The Glass Palace*. Ghosh says "my essential interest is in people and their lives, histories and predicaments" (Hawley 7).

Migration, dislocation or de-territorialization of culture and diaspora are also the major issues of post colonialism. Ghosh's fiction is engaged with these issues. His *The Glass Palace* is considered as an elegy for the diasporic condition. In most of his novels the characters keep moving between more than two countries. Consequently, the resultant issues such as migration, mimicry, hybridity, ambivalence, alienation, sense of loss, unhomed, in-betweenness, plurality of identities and identity crises are significant matters in his fiction.

Irrational, uncivilized, incomprehensible, mystic, and lack of history are common colonial metaphors for colonized people. Ghosh deconstructs these binaries constituted to other the non-West and thereby he interrogates the supremacy of the West and validity of these binaries. In *The Calcutta Chromosome* the subaltern Mangala and her team had discovered chromosome which causes malaria even before the British scientist Ross discovered it. Murugan says, "He (Ross) thinks he is doing experiment on the malaria parasite. And all the time it's he who is the experiment on the malaria parasite" (TCC 69). Here Ghosh subverts the Western binaries and questions the authenticity of Western discourses. Most of his novels uphold magnanimity and humane concern of the 'non-Western non-players' and foreground the irrationality, barbarism, inhumanity and incomprehensibility of West.

Like postcolonial writers, Ghosh tries to rebuild Indian history through his novels. He says like many Indians he grew up on stories of other

countries. But there are plenty of our own stories to be told. So, he incorporates many untold Indian stories, legends and myths in his novels. History is easily interwoven into the narrative framework in Ghosh's fiction and he attempts a comparative study of Asian and African, Indian and Egyptian, Jewish and Islamic cultures. Ghosh has great respect for the work that historians do and he read their books and monographs with avid interest. He is drawn to the past because it provides instances of predicaments that are unique and unrepeatable. They say about the human condition than anything he could make up out of whole cloth. In an interview with history of the present Ghosh says that,

The circumstances in which these predicaments arise are particular to those places and those movements; that is what gives them their resonance. The predicament thus becomes the hearth that makes it possible to inhabit this moment, this history. It shapes the narrative and determines the design and the content of the book. (History of the present A Journal of critical history)

Ghosh's novels are postcolonial thematically as well as in terms of technique. He breaks the traditional time and place unities. There are no barriers of time and space in his fiction. Ghosh uses time to maximum effect because past, present and future coalesce into one. He takes the readers through many parts of the world. The choice of narrator and point of view is an important element of fiction. Ghosh varies his choice of narrator in each of his novels. Today language exerts a pervasive control in Indian fiction in English. Ghosh uses the English language skillfully and artistically. He is free from the British way of using English. He has restrictions of spelling, grammar, sentence-structure, etc. he twists and turns words and succeeds as Rushdie and Roy have done in making the English their own. The characterization in Ghosh's fiction is vivid and picturesque. His characters range from orphan to king. His art of characterization and story telling is compared with that of Chaucer and Charles Dickens. John Hawley points

out that the first and foremost overriding aspects that inform his works are “the stories and the Dickensian proliferation of characters whose lives engage us and who take us to some richly imagined places and times” (Hawley 1). Ghosh employs, deliberately, effectively and meaningfully the postcolonial narrative devices such as, magic-realism, meta-fiction, mixed genres, subversion, chutnification, deconstruction, and story within the story as modes of interrogating, rejecting, resisting Western hegemony, rebuilding and reinstating non-West. This places Ghosh as one of the distinct postcolonial novelists in the contemporary context. The tendency of Ghosh to blend the various genres to produce unparalleled works of literature is a literary innovation of which Ghosh is the supreme master.

Indian English Literature has grown from a sapling to a strong rooted tree in full bloom. Indians, however, did not start writing in English in a day it took several historical events and distinguished personalities to bring Indian writing in English to its present eminence. In the diasporic novels written by Indian writers, there is an imaginary to-and-fro between the country of origin and the host country as if there was a need to explain of themselves and to others the process of their uprootings the condition of their displacement the obstacles to their implantation and the metamorphosis, of their identity in terms of the idea of nationhood that these countries conceived and debate and finally the transnational family bonds, that the diasporics manage to build. The Indian novel in English has had an amazing success in the western world. One of the most common subjects has been, the examination of the rise of nationalism and the independence movement as depicted in the Indian novel. The post colonial Indian novels in English has certainly chased away the orientalist clichés of the Anglo-Indian novel to propose a more authentic representation of Indian reality. Historical Perspective is an effort to contextualise the growth and rise of Indian English Literature, from its inception to its present glory.

CHAPTER 2

VICTIMIZATION AND ALIENATION IN THE CIRCLE OF REASON

Amitav Ghosh is a writer whose style combines the rigours of social research with the masterly ability of spinning a Yarn. As a master story teller, Ghosh can effectively camouflage history, philosophy, science and other social events and concerns that actually make a story within the surprising turns and twists of a riveting narrative. But this is common knowledge that we come to share in our general appreciation of all the master story tellers of the world like Valmiki, Dickens or Gabriel Garcia Marquez. However, it is the subtle interplay of all these wordly ingredients that the storyteller works out, the pattern or designs of life that he or she weaves, which really creates separate hallmarks to distinguish one writer from the other. The story element has been a very strong part of Amitav Ghosh's writings. Even his non-fictional prose is rendered immensely readable through the use of small anecdotal, recounting of events. This should give us a clue about Ghosh's forte: he is always interested in the 'story' of history or histories, ranging from the very personal to the transnational.

Amitav Ghosh is one of the foremost, Indian English writer writes his works in tunes with global change, multicultural environs and cosmopolitanism. One consequence of the paradigm shift anthropology has been to foreground the literariness of ethnography. As James Clifford put it in the preface to *Writing Culture*, the literariness of anthropology – and especially of ethnography is much more than a matter of good writing... Literary process... affect the ways cultural phenomena are registered. The fact that Amitav Ghosh has been able to move freely in his writing between

anthropology, history and fiction is symptomatic of the extent to which traditional boundaries between those disciplines have themselves broken down.

Amitav Ghosh shot into fame with the publication of his first novel, *The Circle of Reason* in 1986. Apart from his Bengali background, his knowledge of Bangladesh, London and Middle East helped him to give a realistic touch to his novels. On the other hand, Calcutta his native city, exerts a powerful influence on Ghosh's imaginations. Its presence is marked and mediated by his birth into what is known as the *bhadralok*, the upper and middle sections of Bengali society that emerged in the nineteenth century as a consequence of the reorganisation of the Bengali economy under colonial rule. The physical environment of the city comes to represent itself to the mind of its inhabitants in particular ways, as for example, it does to the narrator when he visits some poor relations in a part of the city that backs onto Calcutta's ever increasing slums. Thus, if travel is a key register of Ghosh's awareness of the importance of the space in human experience, it is nevertheless his recognition that space is not an inert physical dimension exterior to human consciousness but is rather intimately shaped by the particular ways in which it is imagined that determines his examination of culturally created spaces, such as nation – states, and the borders – both physical and imagined - that delimit and define them.

The most important impact that Calcutta has had on Ghosh's imagination is through its status as an intellectual and cultural centre. Of all its identities, it is this perhaps above all that appeals to the Bengali cultural imagination and that of the *bhadralok* in particular. Established by the British as a trading outpost for their operations in India, Calcutta quickly became the richest city in Asia and British India's capital – the second most important city in the British Empire. It is English, the coloniser's language

that enables access to this international literary scene reinforcing the sense of dependency. Calcutta, then, perhaps offers Ghosh something more than a familiar environment; both social and physical, its importance lies as a signifier of colonial relations as mediated through the global hierarchies of culture. Most notably in *The Circle of Reason*, the city is both a metaphor for the knowledge/ power relations initiated by colonialism, and the stage on which Ghosh re-enacts what has been called the battle for cultural parity that the Bengali cultural elite have waged over since.

The Circle of Reason, concerns the picaresque adventures of Alu, a young weaver from the village near Calcutta, who leaves home to travel across the Indian Ocean to the oil town of al-Ghazira on the Persian Gulf. Reviewers of the novel read it as an allegory about the destruction of traditional village life by the modernizing influx of Western culture, and the subsequent displacement of non-European peoples by imperialism. In the long opening section, set in the village of Lalpukur, Alu is apprenticed as a weaver, while his uncle, Balram, the village schoolmaster, is obsessed with Western ideas, epitomized by his passion for phrenology and the writing of Pasteur. Balram establishes the Pasteur school of Reason, alternatively bores and terrorizes people with his scientific notions and eventually destroys the village by sterilizing it with carbolic acid. Anthony Burgess read the episode as a satire on Western imperialism; while Alu stands for tradition, Balram stands in its demented way, for progress. *The Circle of Reason* certainly explores the relation between culture and imperialism. But Burgess's argument that it juxtaposes stable, traditional cultures with a diasporic, post-colonial culture is a reading made within the paradigm of classical ethnography.

The Circle of Reason, as the name suggests is a book written in defense of reason, logic and rationality. The novel opens with the arrival of a

child 'Alu' in a small village and is divided into three sections. Satwa (Reason), Rajas (Passion) and Tamas (Death). In practical situation logic hardly works. Cause and effect is not practical theory, especially in terms of India where irrationality is pursued almost like a religion. Superstition, blind belief, prejudices, the dominance of the supernatural on the majority of psyche are hindrances in a way of logical thinking. Investigation, first hand exposure and experiences find no place here. *The circle of Reason* of Amitav Ghosh is a revolt against the trend of thought and perception.

The theme of the novel of Ghosh is different from traditional concern of Indian English fiction. It throws a challenge against the age-old ways of thinking in which reason and logic hardly find place. The novel to an extent is episodic in nature. It is a journey from Satwa to Rajas to Tamas that comprise the three parts of the novel. As we will see Ghosh freely mixes past present and future in his books. So he does in this book. He writes in a chain of thoughts. He describes one incident and if the incident links itself to any past happening, he immediately goes to that past incident. So the whole fabric of the novel keeps floating, going backward and forward. And this is quite logical in its own way. In any case present is born out of past. So why one should not go to the great reservoir of memories dreams and desires i.e, past.

When he is eight, Nachiketa Bose comes to sleepy Lalpukur from Calcutta to live with his uncle Balram and aunt Toru Debi. People gathered outside the big house to confirm to it, especially in such unusual circumstances.

it was generally reckoned that the boy's arrival was the real beginning. It was an extra ordinary head-huge, several times too large for an eight year old and curiously uneven, bulging all over with knots and bumps (TCR 3)

He had been given his nickname ‘Alu’ as a part of his identity by Bolai-da, who chased the rickshaw which was bringing Toru-debi and the boy home from the station: “because he had an opinion that the head looked like a potato, a huge, freshly dug, lumpy potato” (TCR 4). At least his uncle Balram, the phrenologist thought that since his large head looked something like potato and portended an interesting future.

His parents had recently died in a car accident. Even though Balram and his brother had been long estranged, Balram and Toru-debi decide to take in Alu and raise him, since they had no children of their own. Alu soon displays an amazing ability to pick up various languages. When at fourteen the boy stops attending school, Balram, the supposed scientist, surprises everyone by encouraging the boy to take up weaving. Alu begins by taking lessons from Shombhu Debnath, a master weaver.

Alu seems a gifted child, just as Balram had predicted; not only he is good at languages, but now he also surpasses his teacher in weaving. “Alu’s butis spun out of his loom; perfect, precise, without blemish” (TCR 86); once Shombhu Debnath said to Alu:

The time has come for you to grow from an apprentice to a weaver. Skill is not enough; you have all that you ever will. Technique is just the beginning. The world is your challenge now. Look around you and see if your loom can encompass it (TCR 86).

Balram, became a phrenologist offers us insight into his quirky personality. He had discovered a book in *practical phrenology* at a second hand bookshop in College Street on 11th January, 1950, the day that the physicist Madam Curie was visiting Calcutta. He decides to leave journalism altogether, and to devote his full energy to phrenology.

The day after the incident at the airport, he accepts an offer of employment from Bhudeb Roy. Balram becomes one of his principal teachers. Roy quickly becomes a political bully in the remote village, though, hiring thugs to enforce his policies at the school and elsewhere. The two men become enemies competing for the minds and hearts of the villagers. Sixteen years on, in 1967, Balram's mind is beginning to show some strain of living under Roy's thumb. He strangely describes the story of his life, for instance, as the biography of discovery of Reason – but most people around him think he has very little to do with reason; in fact, they find him somewhat comic in his pet notions. During an extravagant puja to Maa Saraswati planned by Bhudeb Roy to garner favour with the inspector of Schools, Balram jumped up onto the statue's platform and ripped off its head, declaring it to be Vanity, rather than knowledge. In response, Bhudeb Roy surreptitiously poisons the fish in Balram's pond. Then five of Roy's 'sons' attack Balram's eleven-year-old servant, Maya. In this incident Alu, who was only eleven at the time, had run and fetched Maya's sixteen-year-old brother, who defended her from possible rape.

Balram found his own school and it is called The Pasteur School of Reason; and it is divided into two divisions.

The school would have two main departments. After much careful thought Balram had decided to name one of the Department of pure reason and the other the Department of Practical reason; abstract and concrete reason, a meeting of the two great forms of human thought. Every student would have to attend classes in both Departments. (TCR 116)

In the Department of pure reason, Balram teaches principles of sanitation; in the Department of practical reason, his wife teaches students to tailor and Shombhu Debnath teaches them weaving. The new school has a very successful first year, so in its second year, the third division is added; the Department of the March of Reason, the home base for Reason Militant. The

third division begins by spraying carbolic acid throughout the village, disinfecting everyone and everything. Ghosh uses irony to introduce a series of reversals which demonstrate that reason is paradoxical not logical. As such the Western concept of reasons – which finds paradox to be a problem – is deconstructed.

As the title suggests, one of the principle theme of *The Circle of Reason* is the concept of Reason on which the metaphysics of modernity rests and from which the authority of modern science derives. The novel's interrogation of Reason is achieved primarily through the characterization of Balram, who acts as a prism that refracts and magnifies the idea that Ghosh wishes to explore. Through him, and despite him, Reason emerges as a far from straight forward concept, one far removed from the definition proposed by empiricism and positivism, which see it as a transcendent, transparent operation of human intelligence simply making sense of the world as it is through sensory perception and logical cognition. Balram himself suggests a possible epigraph for the novel when he reflects, somewhat bemusedly, "How tortuous, said Balram; taking Alu's money, is the path of Reason (TCR 89).

It is clear that Balram is quite happy to see himself as the embodiment of Reason, and much of the novel's critique lies in its ironic distance from his self description. He is an archetypical figure of the colonial subject as envisaged by colonial ideologues, a mimic man schooled in the historic achievements of Western knowledge. It is significant, that the novel dwells on his experiences as a student at Calcutta's prestigious Presidency College, which was established as a Hindu College prior to the University itself.

Balram's fascination with science generates much of the novel's debate about the materialistic scientific reason of the West: it is tethered to

its cultural origin, or it possessed of a universal validity. Balram argues that “Science doesn’t belong to countries. Reason doesn’t belong to any nation. They belong to history – to the world”. (TCR 57) Given the obviously naive view point, Balram is frequently presented in an ironic way. Balram is a product of Western education and despite his fervent Indian nationalism, he has internalized the notion that Western science transcends national boundaries in its search for truth. His universalizing approach also problematizes Western sciences, in that he unwillingly exposes its racist subtexts. This is another way in which Ghosh complicates the science/tradition dichotomy, going beyond a simplistic East-West axis.

Throughout the novel, the scientific reason which Balram celebrates is contested by other voices. His friend Gopal historicizes the practice of reason and views it as a source of power, contending that “Even Reason discovers itself through events and people” (TCR 41)

The process of purification by using carbolic acid, Balram disrupts Bhudeb Roy’s latest political gathering. As revenge, Roy burns several of Balram’s possessions to the ground. Balram’s wife, Toru debi had taken his books from their shelves and out into the courtyard, where she sprinkled them with kerosene and burned them all. Alu had managed to save one book and presented it to Balram – it was Vallery – Radot’s *Life of Pasteur*. Bhudeb Roy incites Jyoti Das and the police to attack Balram’s compound, and they inadvertently set afire the explosives that Rakhal, the former – revolutionary – turned – business – manager, had resumed making. In the resulting conflagration Balram, Toru-debi, Maya and Rakhal are all killed.

a brilliant sunburst of light arced into the sky and the whole forest shimmered in the errie silver glow. He saw it reach its zenith and curve downwards, and fall out of his sight, behind the bamboo. There was a moment of absolute stillness when it struck him that the light must have fallen very near the house.

And then the earth shook and the air seemed to come alive and hit him with walls of force, and when he opened his eyes again exactly where the house ought to have been there were orange flames shooting into the sky. (TCR 160)

Alu began to run towards the light but Bolai-da saved him. He dragged Alu into the forest and said “They’ll be around it now, looking for you. But they are not going to get you. I named you and I’ll see you safe somewhere”. (TCR, 160)

Bhudeb Roy finds in Alu an easy scapegoat. Roy declares Alu a dreaded terrorist. From this point onwards, the dangerous life of Alu begins. Poor Alu becomes the victim of circumstance. He is grinded into pieces in the mechanism of law who seeks refuge from place to place. He begins to live on the edge, on the brink of normality. Jyothi Das, an Assistant Superintendent of Police is told about Alu and his alleged terrorist activities. Alu rushes to Calcutta, from there to Kerala and finally on a boat to al-Ghazira. All the while he is chased by the police. He even had to give up travelling by buses and trains; he moves through Nilgiri forest. Alu’s life is away from the normal. The threat of police constantly enhances the thrill of his adventure. The vagabond-like nature of this tale becomes very clear. Besides being a comment on present civilization of root-lessness, the story of Alu also acts as a means for the reader to get adventurous. Alu’s story kindles imagination. Adventure, threat, danger are deep based in human psyche. Alu’s story gives us a chance to live or relive that part of our psyche. It is a depiction of a life without centre.

The Circle of Reason follows the fortunes a young weaver Alu, who is brought up in a Bengal village and after a false accusation that he is a member of a terrorist group subsequently flees westwards, first to the fictional Gulf state and later to Algeria. Using the motif of journey Ghosh has drama suspense and mystery too. Alu’s journey across the Indian Ocean

on a mechanized boat called *Mariamamma* allows Ghosh to depict the risks endured by thousands of Indians who leave their native land in search of a prosperous future. Illegal emigrants hazard their lives voyaging on frail vessels. Alu's particular boat also bears witness to the wide range of social types who make the dangerous crossing in pursuit of economic security; among the passengers are a professor, a travelling salesman, and a madam and her girls, one of whom is even pregnant. Asnani describes the novel: "It is also an interesting tale of myriad colourful people of man's relation with the machine, his curse and salvation" (Jha 216).

Indu Bhatt describes:

The circles which are interconnected, and the circles of Alu, which always remains outside – in tracing the journeys of the main character, she concludes that Ghosh reveals too much of passion and too little of perception. (qtd.in Jha 216)

In an example of hens coming home to roost, it becomes known that Bhudeb Roy's wife Parboti-debi, who had conceived their daughter on the same night as the plane crash, had actually fathered the job by Shombhu Debnath and they leave with their child and go to Calcutta. The neighbourly feud, in turn, is mistaken by the state authorities as potentially political in nature and by the time Alu escapes as the sole survivor of the disastrous denouement to Balram's conflict with Bhudeb Roy he is a wanted fugitive having been absurdly identified as a political extremist and threat to the state.

Alu is clearly the protagonist of the novel, although for a large section of the narrative he remains more a kind of silent centre, through which the various discursive threads in the narrative are woven together.

Balram's friend Gopal helps get Alu to Calcutta, where he is introduced to Rajan, a member of a caste of weavers that has family

connections throughout India. They helped him to travel down to Kerala and the small former French colony of Mahe. All seems fine for a time, but five months after the fire that killed Balram, Jyothi Das traces Alu to this out-of-the-way spot. However, just two days before, as it happens, Alu, along with other illegal Indian migrants, finds himself smuggled into the Gulf emirate of al-Ghazira where he lives in a boarding house run by an ageing former courtesan, Zindi-al-Tiffaha, along with a multi-ethnic, multilingual, diasporic community of illegal immigrants from India, East Africa, the other Arab states and Bangladesh. Alu there resumes his craft of weaving, but is accidentally buried alive when a new concrete building in which he is working as a labourer collapses. Most think Alu is dead. When he is freed after a few days he emerges a new man, almost a reincarnation of Gandhi – at least of Balram:” He was sitting behind the loom on the platform, weaving very fast, but without so much as looking at the loom, and talking all the while. For Alu was a very silent man” (TCR 299).He begins immediately speaking about purity:

Purity was what he had wanted, purity and cleanliness – not just in his home or in laboratory or a university, but in the whole world of living men. It was that which spurred him on his greatest hunt, the chase in which he drove the enemy of purity, the quintessence of dirt, the demon, which keeps the world from cleanliness, out of its lairs of darkness and gave it a name – the Infinitely small, the Germ. (TCR 301, 302)

He also speaks about the need for a war against money. He wins converts to his cause, and the result will remind readers of Balram’s earlier school: a communistic system in which all salaries are pooled and no one makes a profit from their enterprise beyond what they immediately need.

Alu’s mystical renunciation of profit sends Zindi into paroxysms of concern, since she has hoarded money for years and years. She now sees her financial security threatened by the very people she has helped for so many

years, so she seeks another kind of protection. She angles to get Jeevanbhai Patel's shop from him by trying to get Forid Mian to marry her, but Jeevanbai commits suicide just before her plan is to come to fruition. Jeevanbai had been acting as a spy for the local magistrate and through the magistrate, Jeevanbai has betrayed Alu to Jyothi Das.

Echoing the conflagration in which he had destroyed Balram's world, Jyothi Das and local Magistrate bring down the power of law on a gathering of those who subscribe to Alu's communist – doctrine. Many are killed, in the fire: Haji Fahmy, Rakesh and Karuthamma. Once again a migration is called for. Zindi leads Alu, Kulfi, the baby Bose, Abu Fahl and Zaghoul to her native village. But instead of finding refuge there, her family rejects them even though it had been her money over the years that had build homes for her brothers and their wives. Now Zindi and friends head further west to Algeria. All along their trip, though, they are dogged by Jyothi Das still in pursuit.

In Algeria, Zindi has Alu and Kulfi pretend to be married and they call themselves Mr. and Mrs. Bose. In this new setting, we are introduced to a small emigrant Indian community Mr. and Mrs. Varma, Dr. and Mrs. Mishra and Mrs. Kanda Swami, a nurse.

It turns out that Jyothi Das is a house guest of the Mishra's and he inevitably meets Alu and his friends. Jyothi Das, still a virgin begs Kulfi for one night's liaison - and at the suggestion she has a heart attack and dies. An argument ensues between Varma and Mishra over the possibilities of performing a proper Hindu funeral for her. In his conversation with Jyothi Das, Alu learns more of what happened when he and Zindi managed to escape the ambush of the protesters at the Star. Haji Fahmy, Professor Samuel, Chunni, Rakesh and many of the others had not died but had been deported to Egypt or India. Haji Fahmy died of shock that same day, though.

Meanwhile the Professor still held out hope for the future. Alu, Zindi and baby Bose continue their migration west, at least as far as Tangier, where they bid Jyothi Das farewell as he heads to a new life in Europe.

‘Hope is the beginning’ (TCR 457)

Then they turned happily to al-Ghazira.

Through Alu’s character, the ironic parody of reason is continued: his picaresque misadventures can be considered as half-conscious defiance to the concept of Reason. Tutored by Balram on the omnipotence of reason, Alu represents the powerful presence of non-reason. He becomes a weaver because his uncle believes that a weaving loom is a final tool for a rational, mechanical man. This gives, the novelist an opportunity to give a historical perspective to the skill of weaving:

Man at loom is the finest example of Mechanical man; a creature who makes his own world as no other can, with his mind. The machine is man’s curse and his salvation, and no machine has created man as much as the loom. It has created not separate worlds but one, for it has never permitted the division of the world. The loom recognizes no continents and no countries. (TCR 59)

On an allegorical plane Alu is someone rooted in identity. But as we will see by his torturous wandering Alu seems only to satirize his name. Ghosh divide man as mechanical man and other type of man can be easily assumed, thinking man. In this thinking, Ghosh, is talking about the Man on the loom or ever further the idea behind on loom and not just the instrument. It is also idea behind history. Loom united human race at times, it divides at other. It brought victories to some, subjugation to others. This passage is significant in its historical perspective, simply because the author here goes not to mere events or states of being but to themes that run them. The anticolonial note against the monopoly of handshine cloth is obvious. There is relation of

loom to computer; the most advanced achievement of Man at machines is beautifully and factually established.

Reason is linked in the narrative with the idea of purity of the poles in the western binary constructions. The novel brings forth, several settings in which hybridized versions of reason are sketched. The idea of purity is closely linked with the idea of pure origin and pure distinct essences, which lie behind the typically Western rationalist ideology of binary constructions. Purity also refers to universalize discourses like that of Western science, or of Orientalism. The theme of purity runs through all three parts of the novel. In the practical level, Balram disinfects the village of Lalpukur with carbolic acid to destroy the germs brought in by recent refugees:

Balram started a campaign. He went around the shanties, warning people of the swift death they were calling on themselves. He called meetings and urged them to contribute what they could to buy carbolic acid. People listened to him, for they knew he was a school master, but they hesitated. It was not till he started a fund with a bit of his own money that they threw in a few annas and paisas. Then with the help of a few volunteers, Balram began to disinfect every exposed inch of the new settlements. (TCR 66)

The concept of purity is also deconstructed through the hilarious student organisation called the Rationalists, who blend ideas from the Hindu religion with Western natural science.

As for real Brahma, he is without attributes, without form, nothing but an essence in everything and in nothing. The Brahma is nothing but the atom. (TCR 50)

Ideological purity is also sought in the mock socialist uprising of the second part “passion”, where money, and consequently private ownership, is declared impure. The Third part, “Death”, describes the merging, or transcending, of all the thematic binaries of the narrative: tradition vs.

Modernity, East vs. West and religion vs. science. Purity is negotiated through the modified version of Tagore's play, *Chitrangada* and the clash between ancient rules and rituals on the one hand and the necessities of the practical present on the other (carbolic acid is used as holy water in Kulfi's burial). The tension, then, is not merely between science and religion as system of thought, but there is also the contrast between science and religion as collections of rules and rituals to be read from books and the adaptation of them to the often surprising needs of the immediate practical present.

The comic tone of the novel, well meaning and full of positive energy embodied by the character of Balram in the first part, takes on a dark and cynical nature with Dr.Mishra's ironical comments in the third part. Mrs.Verma is ready to modify the rituals to allow for restrictions caused by the situation. Ordinary wood is used instead of sandal wood, carbolic acid is used as holy water and butter for ghee. The use of carbolic acid nicely brings together the cleaning rituals of ancient religion (holy water) and modern science (carbolic acid).

The world has come full circle, he groaned. Carbolic acid has become holy water... What does it matter whether it is Ganga-gal or carbolic acid? It is just a question of cleaning the place. People thought something was clean once, now they think something else is clean (TCR 444, 445)

The Hindu religion is here seen quite as pure, distinct and rule-bound as Western science. Kulfi has to have a funeral, and for this reason Mrs.Verma and others have to abandon rules and purity and allow for the fact that they are Indian migrants living on the edge of the Algerian Sahara in Africa. In the modern migrant world of strange and sudden connections and situations, wholeness and purity have to be abandoned.

Many historical events take place in the novel as the Indian nationalist struggle of the 1930s, the Bangladesh war of 1971 and the

international tide of migration to the Middle East of 1970s onwards. The novel is concerned with the period of British colonization of India.

There is no barriers of time and space in the fiction of Amitav Ghosh. The reader is able to move with the characters “to envision the way in which the past is ever present without his consciousness”. (qtd, in Jha 215)

The Circle of Reason foregrounds the community of illegal migrants – refugees, who are a victim of economic and ecological inequity and also are at the margin of an exclusive culture practiced by the co-operate elites.

That it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history – subjugation, domination, Diaspora, displacement – that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking (qtd. in Jha 216)

The first part of the novel *Satwa* is set in the village Lalpukur which has been inhabited by wave of settlers who are environmental refugees, displaced as a result of partition in 1947 and Bangladesh war of 1971. The novel focuses on environmental people, who are forced by ecocidal force of war, colonialism, corporate agencies of the state to become environmental refugees.

Long before the world has sniffed genocide in Bangladesh, Lalpukur began to swell. It grew and grew. First, it was brothers with burnt backs and balls cut off at the roots. Then it was cousins and cousins of cousins. Then did not matter; borders dissolved under the weight of millions of people in panic-stricken flight from as army of animals. (TCR 64)

The novel shows how colonial power structures and knowledge production strategies become reproduced and subverted when applied in colonial and post-colonial circumstances. It also features the ways in which subaltern people both escape the grip of the political logic of the modern state and fall prey to it. Further, the narrative brings to the fore the ways in which

diasporic and migrant connections escape the same logic. In the end, the novel shows, how Reason is made to abandon its hegemonic position in the name of practical everyday concern in many cultured human encounters comprising multiple customs and traditions

Ghosh provides several instances of internal Diasporas in the novel. The writer reminds us that the Lalpukur was a village of migrant settlers who were “vomited out of their native soil years ago in another carnage, and dumped hundreds of miles away, they had no anger left. Their only passion was memory (TCR 63)

The settler’s nostalgia for the lost home is presented as a sort of pastoral longing.

a longing for a land where the green was greener, the rice whiter, the fish bigger than boats; where the rivers’ names sang like Megha Malhar on a rainy day – the Meghna, the Dholesori, the Kritinosh, the shitolokhka, the majestic Arialkha, wider than the horizon. (TCR 63)

Ghosh employs “avian imagery” to show the flight of characters from one place to another.

The emotional quote about Lalpukur that opened our discussion of *The Circle of Reason* suggests that its author feels deeply indeed, about history’s victims – especially those who are forced into exile by events beyond their control. This novel is a complex tapestry of stories of individuals whose lives overlap, pulls apart, and separate – and sometimes find each other again in new contexts. It is the story of obsession – obsessive rationalism that some embrace as science and others ridicule as insanity and obsessive manhunts. *The circle of Reason* is a detective story, a story of exile, a travelogue, a women’s right tract, a Marxist protest, a plea for humanistic camaraderie. The narrative technique employed here sometimes

shares the characteristics of magical realism, but they are generally straight forward and realistic.

The Circle of Reason highlights the precarious existence of migrant – refugees in post – oil economies as they are excluded from the urban upmarket culture and condemned to occupy marginalized, excluded sites and spaces. The ghetto called Ras, occupied by refugees, from different parts of the world is vividly described.

She looked over the roofs of corrugated iron and halved oil-drum, with their crazily angled wooden platforms and tracery of pumpkin vines, and at last, led by a strip where the dense patchwork was cut through the charred, blackened frames of shacks. (TCR211)

Exile is the main theme touched upon in this novel and then returned to with more emphasis in Ghosh's later work. At the book's end it is the villain Jyothi Das who becomes the full fledged migrant, now finding himself forever on the run.

The whole sky will be migrating over Tangier now.
I am migrating myself – to Desseldoxf.
I've got nowhere else to go.
Can I come with you too? (TCR 455)

Alu has found a new community with Zindi and seeks a new rootedness – in a foreign land but with a sense of new connection. Ghosh portrays an exilic Indian community in this novel. Though few in numbers, they are sharply drawn and displayed as being at each others' throat vying for authenticity as the spokesperson for an 'authentic' Indian culture. In this regard, Mrs. Verma decidedly gets the better of the argument – expressing a sincere appreciation of Hinduism for example, while Dr. Mishra seems completely deracinated. The ironies mount up, as they propose to put on a dance drama of the tale of Chitrangada and Arjuna, with Kulfi, former prostitute as the heroine.

Dr.Mishra clearly knows the detailed rubrics involved in Hindu rituals, but he has not imbibed its true spirit.

This novel is about the aesthetic quest necessary for the motivation and survival of the artiste in every soul in an inherently deadening, hostile and uncertain environment. Almost all the major characters in this novel try to understand and constitute the world and hence motivate their actions through patterning of some kind. In fact the principal quest in the novel seems to be one for the right metaphor.

The most important and prominent theme in the writing by Ghosh is the transcendence of culturally constructed differences, lines and borders for the good of common humanity and interaction. These differences may be conceived spatially, temporally and culturally, and they may be related to class, race and ethnicity, but the on-going mission of Ghosh seems to be to indicate their constructedness and to bring to our awareness other possibilities of constructing the world based on connections. *The Circle of Reason* explores the paradigm shift of world trade and business. It reveals how a weaving world turns into a construction world.

The central quest of *The Circle of Reason* seems to be to look for the appropriate meaning of life. The novel implies that 'reality' is also constructed and mediated and is to the extent fictional and can be understood through an appropriate reading process. Unlike Rushdie, Ghosh never gives free rein to his imagination, folk tales and the supernatural don't intrude frequently in the narrative process and the caricatured characters never connect with the readers with equal force. In spite of this however, the proclivity for border crossing is never to be missed. By crossing the borders of the conventional realistic mode and the fantastic mode of story-telling, Ghosh attempts a post colonial critique of Western reason with unique effect.

Deriving three *gunas*, Satwa, Rajas and Tamas from *Bhagavadgita*, Ghosh names the three sections of the novels. According to the Sakhya philosophy, nature is composed of three forces called, in Sanskrit, Satwa, Rajas and Tamas. These are manifested in the physical world are what we may call equilibrium, activity and inertness. Tamas is typified as darkness or inactivity; Rajas is activity, expressed as attraction or repulsion, and Satwa is the equilibrium of the two. Ulka Joshi asserts:

The Circle of Reason has a circular pattern on the lives of Indian philosophy: she describes the metaphors – to emphasize the circles and concludes that throughout the novel the novelist seems to manipulate the circles. (qtd. in Jha 214)

D.A. Shankar has observed the tripartite structure is reminiscent of Indian's philosophy and the three qualities that make individuals what they are: Tamas, Rajas and Satwik. These form the order of the soul's upward evolution. This implies that it is possible to see the narrative as a kind of picaresque *Bildungsroman* where Alu moves through different stages as his journey continues. In the novel, however, the order of the stages is reversed: Satwa: Reason: Rajas: Passion: and Tamas: death. Obviously, it is possible to interpret the novel through both sequences. If we follow the first one, the original order from the philosophical tradition, and look at the first part of the novel under the thematic of death, we notice the death of Balram and others in the explosion in Lalpukur actually starts Alu's journey, both physically and mentally. Death in other words is the end, but also the beginning. And if we examine the last part under 'Reason' we can conclude that the revelation following the dissolving of the concepts of purity, distinct essences and binary constructions in general in a sense brings reason with it, although this reason is very different from, indeed almost the opposite of, the one based on the ideology of Western modernity.

The order stated in the novel, it is easy to see that the obsession of Balram and other educated middle-class Indians with western originated science and rationality fits in quite well with the title 'Reason' of the first part. Reason is action, where by people can produce their own discursive truth by interconnecting, or weaving, various discursive threads into their own personal texture. According to Balram, "weaving is Reason which makes the world mad and makes it human (TCR 62)

The title of the second part "Passion" would foreground the uneducated illiterate lower classes of the Souq with their interests in daily survival and story telling. And 'Death' as the title of the last part refers both to the death of Kulfi and the death of the idea of purity as the goal of and basis for human endeavours. The death in the last part also simultaneously signifies birth, a new beginning, as both Jyothi Das and Alu and Zindi embark on their journeys to Europe and India after the dismantling of the modernist binaries through the symbolic combining of purity and impurity and the burning of the *Life of Pasteur*.

Alu is indisputably the main protagonist, the glue that holds a nomadic novel together, but for much of the action he is the silent centre around which an abundance of other stories are told. He has no identity to speak of since he has no family and no identity documents. Clearly, his subsequent classification as a political extremist parodies the governmentality of the state, but he is classified as a fugitive precisely because he has no identity that the state can recognize. In a sense, he is a fugitive from identity itself: for a subaltern is not merely dominated but also is not a 'subject' because he or she is not subject to the rationale of governmentality and eludes the categories that determine its policies.

The marginal women characters led by Zindi are the victims of both the patriarchal oppression and social malpractices in their homeland. The

word Mariamma, by its etymological meaning means mother. In reality the boat offers them at least a temporary respite from their traumatic past and uneven future. It is Ghosh's design of the narrative that the principal marginal figures meet in this temporary shelter that is the boat Mariamma. There are other characters like Rakesh and Professor Samuel who are also in this group of disposed subalterns, though with different motives and different social background. Yomuna Siddiki in her essay "Police and Postcolonial Rationality" in *The Circle of Reason* attempts to categorize the different factors, responsible for the problems of the marginal in the perspective of post colonial rationality. (Jha 179)

Ghosh's venture into the world of fiction starts with the publication of *The Circle of Reason* in which the author interweaves a well patterned narrative incorporating a wide range of thematic strains. He weaves a complex pattern of stories juxtaposing lives in rural Bengal and remote al-Ghazira with the linguistic verve and technique. In this novel the problem of the marginal is explored in context with forced or circumstantial migration. In the course of the story we confront with the misery of the dispossessed people who starts their voyage to al-Ghazira in quest of a utopian community. We see the protagonist Alu and the migrant body of women sex workers who constitutes a community in the boat, based on elemental human concern among themselves. Some of them expect to achieve their due social importance in the fictitious land of al-Ghazira which they were denied to them in their homeland.

CHAPTER 3

AN ETERNAL QUEST FOR FREEDOM

Every great artist exposes through his work imaginative vision of life and the creation of his work depends upon the range of his experience and perceptions. Such perceptions enable us to relive of our pain with the identification of the vision of the artist. As Witman says of his book, “When you touch my book you touch my heart. Such type of heart touching expression is the book *The Shadow Lines*” The questions that the author has sought to raise regarding concepts like nation, nationalism and communalism has pertinence even in the current day scenario of India. References to the militant activities in Assam, Tripura, Punjab and others clearly reflects the author’s intention of interrogating the validity of such notions like freedom, sovereignty and ethnicity in a diverse country like India. However, the most important aspect discussed in the novel is how the concept of nation existed differently in the consciousness of different characters. The narrative of *The Shadow Lines* is an effort in this direction of making people free from all baneful customs and beliefs which have divided the human race in narrow cells.

Amitav Ghosh is better known for his writings more specially writing about the Asian commoners and their societal problems. In all his writing starting from his first novel *The Circle of Reason* to his latest venture *The River of Smoke*, he has fulfilled his promises to highlight the issues of Indians (of greater India or Indian subcontinent), Peoples’ movement, haunting for settled life, a regular bread and butter, elevating standard of living and seeking a sound economic condition. His writings trace the roots of uprooting the people and their settlement and under which conditions they are made and forced to migrate across the country and continents. “We know that the fictional world of expatriate Indian writers reflects a wide and varied

range. Alienation from the roots, cultural dislocation, seeking an identity in an adopted land, conflicts between the values of motherland those of the western society, problems of assimilation in a new social milieu, nostalgic memories, racial discrimination, hybridity, nationalism and the sense of being marginalised community in the adopted homeland are the dominant issues in the novels of Indian immigrants. Amitav Ghosh's novels, broadly speaking, reflect, besides the colonial as well as postcolonial society, patterns of history, subaltern consciousness, issues of crossing national boundaries, the meaning of political freedom, the impact of globalization and dynamics of displacement in his own distinctive style"(qtd. in. Shrama 153) In many of his writings another dominating area 'nation nationalism' is traced and it is further endorsed by numerous critics and fans.

Ghosh has used historical memories to construct concept of freedom and its numerous connotations in the modern world. After going through the novel, the reader can come out with the view that human society all over the world has unifying emotions and feelings but the distraction of castes, colour and creed has divided us into small units which are constantly at war with one another. The idea of quest for freedom is all pervasive in the novel as it examines and investigates the meaning of freedom for human being in the modern spectrum existence. The novel weaves together the idea of freedom juxtaposing past and present, the personal and public, the social and political. Ranging across three generations and moving between two contrasting cultures the narrative provides penetrating study of freedom, as an important and all pervading force. The major characters of the novel reflect ideas in their own individualistic manner. When the narrator in the novel asks his grandmother if she would have been willing to kill like that, she replies, "But I would have prayed for strength, and God willing, yes, I would have killed him. It was for our freedom, I would have done anything to be free". (TSL 41)

The Hindi or Urdu words for the nation, *desh* or *watan*, reverberating with pre-national echoes, bring out the inadequacy and violence involved in translating alien concepts. When asked to name one's *desh* or *watan* in these languages, as in some other Indian vernaculars, one is expected to identify a regional place identity. If a more specific location is demanded, the terms can be narrowed down to a smaller place of belonging. An attempt to avoid the confusion caused by the terms' multiple place significations by replacing them with a word *Ghar* or home is even more problematic. For many Indians, like Tha'mma in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, coming home is to 'go away' from the nation. Conversely, people might be forced to make a home in a new land that is not their original place. Yet others might not have a home in a physical space. "Imagine what it must be like to die in another country, abandoned and alone in your old age". (TSL149).

The Shadow Lines attempts to explore the disjunctures between multiple constructions of the nation in the Indian imagery. He also confronts imperialist history; the chief instrument of the disruption of colonized place, with the prehistory of India. The master narrative of imperialism and nationalism, constructed through European historiographical methods, have erased and overwritten the little stories of small places. Ghosh's search for these tales in family chronicles and neighbourhood yarns makes him dig up histories buried and forgotten under the national edifice. These stories retell the lives of ordinary families living in small intimate places by building on their memories. Even when they cross natural / national boundaries, such stories remains confined to homes, streets or small neighbourhoods. Public events occasionally invade these intimate spaces where their occupants inadvertently walk into public areas. As memories of these events often don't match, the veracity of these stories is often thrown into doubt. Ghosh substitutes stories for history to unmask the narrative of history. Though he deflates the objective pretensions of scientific history and the essentialist

claims of the nation, he sees the awareness of the imaginary nature of places are leading to new self-imaginings.

But if there aren't any trenches, or anything, how are people to know? where is the difference then? And if there's no difference both sides will be the same; what is it all for them – partition and all the killing and everything – if there isn't something in between? (TSL167)

These are words exclaimed by the unnamed grandmother in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*. Ghosh in his novel about partition and immigration explores man's eternal quest for freedom. This desire to be free is not cultivated, it is ingrained. It germinates from the seed laid deep down inside the human heart.

It is the tale of a family, which used to live in Dhaka before partition in 1947 is shifted to Kolkata. The narrative of *The Shadow Lines* begins in 1939, the year when the Second World War commenced. An unnamed narrator tells us the story. It is the story of three generations of the narrator's family spread over Kolkata, Dhaka and London. *The Shadow Lines* ends essentially in 1964 when a cycle of violence erupts in both India and Pakistan. In 1939, at the age of eight, the narrator's father's cousin Tridib goes to England, and in 1964 he is murdered by a mob, near to his father's original family home in Dhaka. Thus his boyhood experiences in war-time London and his violent killing twenty five years later in Dhaka contribute to the constitution of the end points of the novel's essential narrative. The relationship woven around families of Data-Chaudhri's of Bengal and the Prices of London continues for three generations. Going through the story of the novel, we come across the partition of 1947 that divides the Indian sub-continent into two parts. The two parts of Bengal became the parts of two different independent countries – India and Pakistan. We also know about the narrator's two different realizations of the boundaries drawn between

two countries. Tha'mma is a vital character who also experiences two different notions of idealism regarding Dhaka which is her place of birth. Her one experience is before her nephew Tridib's killing and another follows the tragic incident. The violence following the partition raises questions regarding the existing political system of border lines and the modern idea of nation. Tridib tells us a dream of a better place without border and countries. As these factors cannot serve the true purpose, the writer yearns for a world where only a common humanity will live and there will be no place for multinational identities.

The novel is divided into two parts – *Going away and Coming Home*. In the second section of the novel coming Home, Ghosh returns to the Indian 'Sub-continent' to Kolkata and Dhaka. *The Shadow Lines* come to us through the narration but the narrator remains unnamed and undescribed. He is Tha'mma's grandson and is greatly influence by his uncle Tridib in everyway and superimposes his identity on his own. From him, the narrator learns about tropical snakes, Irish myths, Indian archaeology and the London gossip. Tridib fires the boy's imagination with a longing to know, to experience and know the world not through passing the examinations but by the use of powerful and precise imagination.

Tridib, the son of a high official in the foreign office who held string of important offices in India and abroad, he stayed in a big mansion along with his grandmother at Ballygunji in Calcutta as his father mostly stayed out on foreign assignments. He is fond of reading and is a voracious reader and the room where he stays is full of files of them. He is a versatile entertainer and though he cannot get started on his own career, has a high influence on the lives around him. "He was working on Ph.D. in Archaeology – something to do with sites associated with Sena dynasty of Bengal". (TSL7)

He has an uncanny ability to look beyond time and space. His imagination knows no boundaries. He has a shaping influence on the narrator who regards him as his mentor and guide. Narrator states that Tridib has given him worlds to travel in and eyes to see them with. He has already experienced and travelled without actually moving out. Like Tridib, narrator too possesses a strong imagination. His boyhood is filled with Tridib's London memories and his own visit there later is a reliving of the scenes and events of Tridib's experiences there. He fires narrator's imagination with a desire to know everything not by the middle class mentality of qualifying the examinations in good grades but the use of his powerful imagination. Both Tha'mma and May are responsible for his tragic death as much as he himself is for his.

An unnamed first person narrator through whose consciousness everything that happens in the course of the narrative is mediated, recalls his boyhood admiration of his uncle Tridib, whose death in a communal riot is the pivot around which the narrator's mnemonic peregrinations revolve. The narrator himself was not present at Tridib's death so his attempt to make sense of it is haunted by this absence. Around this absent centre, the narrator's swirl of memories is constructed through the assimilation of other people's recollections of the event: Tridib's younger brother Robi and May Price, an English woman with whom Tridib was becoming romantically involved said, "I saw three bodies. They were all dead. They'd cut Khalil's stomach open. The old man's head had been hacked off. And they'd cut Tridib's throat, from ear to ear". (TSL276) Tridib was their enemy, a Hindu from India. As his name suggests, Tridib is trinity. In an act to save others, he dies. Tridib is the sacrifice of human race at the altar of illogical hatred. Tridib is definitely a prophetic figure.

It is through their narratives that his own is assembled and the novel discloses how an identity is patched up – or woven, to use Ghosh’s favourite metaphor – through interconnecting narratives which may or may not add up to something. In the process of constructing his own identity, the narrator’s self-fashioning intersects with the formation of collective identities. In his effort to find out why his uncle was murdered in a communal riot, the narrator embarks on a historical quest to try and explain another absence, this time the silence about the riot in the historical records, the national media and consequently its absence in the narrator’s own memory. *The Shadow Lines* – becomes a book

not about any one event but about the meaning of such events and their effects on the individuals who live through them... I had to resolve a dilemma, between being a writer and being a citizen. (The Ghost of Mrs. Gandhi. The Imam and the Indian. (qtd in Hawley 60)

The Shadow Lines of the title are accordingly both subjective and objective, experimental and political; they are those invisible borders that mark the transition from youth to maturity, the past from the present, and those intangible but deeply felt markers of identity that mark oneself off from others; one’s own community from others: the correlates of which constitute the material borders of political entities such as nation – states which physically mark and limit the spatial and temporal co-ordinates of their citizens’ experiences. The novel attempts to focus on the fact that narrow minded people have divided the whole human race by drawing lines. The consideration of boundaries, class, colours and religions have kept people into fetters but humanity is in a state of consistent endeavours to seek a space beyond the exposed boundaries.

They had drawn their borders, believing in that pattern, in the enchantment of lines, hoping perhaps that once they had etched their borders upon the map, the two bits of land would

sail away from each other like the shifting tectonic plates of the prehistoric Gondwanaland. What they had felt, I wondered when they discovered that they had created not separation, but a yet-undiscovered Irony. (TSL257)

This novel for which he got the Sahitya Akademi Award for the year 1989, is a good example of 'Magical Realism'. The theme of the novel is restricted to the people of a very small, cross section of an upper middle class Bengali Family. The orthodox Bengali family is depicted at three stages – before partition, after partition and in recent times. The first part of the novel 'Going away' deals with the family's exist from Dhaka during the riot ridden days of the partition and the second part 'Home Coming' deals with the grandmother's futile attempt to rescue her only living uncle Jethamosai from their ancestral home surrounded by muslim refugees who would become violent at times. Ghosh's originality lies in his depiction of Communal strife in Calcutta and Bangladesh. He seems to say that there is a very marginal difference between fiction and reality. The suggestion is that there is a shadow line between reality and imagination. And reality is multifaceted.

Another theme of the novel is the concept of nationalism that is gaining ground in today's world. The author has held the extreme form of nationalism responsible for many a problem these days. The separatist and secessionist tendencies are the outcome of it. Love of the country, passion inspired nationalism and intoxication of patriotism cannot but lead to jingoism.

First and foremost theme of *The Shadow Lines* is that it is an attempt to draw the attention of the world to do away with borders that divide the people. Humanity after all is the same everywhere and any attempt to create differences is not only hazardous but also futile. Ghosh manages in a masterly way time of two kinds time past i.e. memory and time present i.e.

reality. There is nothing on earth that can divide a memory. Many lines and borders may be drawn but it can never set people free of their reminiscences, free of their associations, free of the love and a sense of belonging for their place of birth. The second thing it considers is how many of these lines can be drawn or divisions made. As Roby rightly pointed out, it is all a mirage. The world cannot be divided into innumerable small states to satisfy the urge of the people to give their frantic sense of nationalism a political entity and a name. If such a thing could give freedom then perhaps it was worth it but as Roby himself is tediously familiar of the fact that it is not. Tridib's death would have set him free but in seventeen years of his demise Roby has not been able to either forget him or his manner of death. Similarly in Indian context, first it was the creation of Pakistan then the demand arose for Punjab, the North East and then Kashmir. Partition or secession is no solution. It may be on the other hand trigger the never ending hostilities and violence. There can be no better example than India.

The narrator is closely related and attached to his grandmother and Ila. And this enables him to explain their inner conflicts and struggles. His close affinity to Tridib matures him beyond his age making him capable enough to understand the complexities of his grandmother's character. His Tha'mma is complex in the sense and she wants to break away from her traumatic past, but yet she is unable to disentangle herself completely from the very past. "She began on one of her Dhaka stories, one about the old house and the people who lived down the lane". (TSL211)

But she leaves her past behind, gets hold of the reins of her family and moves further. She is the matriarch of her family, who single – handedly rules her home. In the process of survival she hardens herself and becomes so self reliant and independent. On the surface level she had severed her bonds with her past but deep inside is a concealed desire to go back to

Dhaka. She tries desperately to get in touch with her cousin who lives in Calcutta. *The Shadow Lines* shows the plight of the grandmother and her loss of the sense mooring; a point of reference to which one returns for assurance. Her loss was caused due to the borders imposed on her,

Born in Dhaka and forced to migrate to Calcutta as a consequence of the bloodshed of the partition. Thamma feels that her sense of political identity – that being an Indian citizen – is at odds with her nostalgic longing for her roots that lies outside the political and geographical boundaries of India in Dhaka (qtd. Arif – 2013)

The Shadow Lines begins with an Indian passage to England: the natives are the travellers. The central fact of travel in this Indian family's experience immediately demands that we modify our expectations about Indian culture and the way it is depicted in English novels about the Raj. Furthermore, these Indians are going abroad in 1939, the year Britain declared war on Germany. Classical ethnography assumes that the culture of the Western observer is a stable and coherent point from which to observe native society. Ghosh undermines this notion by depicting Britain at war with Germany, so that Partition takes place against the background of an equally unstable Europe. The parallels between Germany and England, and India and Pakistan effectively undermine any distinction between East and West Colony and metropolis and point to similarities and continuities that cut across these differences.

The longing for freedom is universal and primitive among human beings. Geopolitical sovereignty was a major quest during the age of grand mother. In the modern age, intellectual independence is under threat with colonizers casting their technological nets for the third world mind. Thus Tridib's insistence upon imaginative freedom is, according to Ghosh, the only way to preserve intellectual integrity.

The political freedom is making the novel contemporary. The meaning of political freedom in the modern world is shown complex and having no solution. In the novel Ghosh establishes that historically when different culture and communities become antagonistic to each other, it led to major problems.

It is this that sets apart the thousand million people who inhabit the subcontinent from the rest of the world – not language not food, not music – it is the special quality of loneliness that grows out of the fear of the war between oneself and one's image in the mirror. (TSL225)

Using examples from history the author implies that such antagonism is the haunting fear in contemporary India also. Ghosh realizes that with the dominant tradition, complex cultural communal antagonism grows instead of providing a safer ground for the survival of man.

The Shadow Lines deals with the effects of fear on memory and one's engagement with the world. The memories of the 1964 riot traumatize the narrator, and he successfully blocks them until a chance remark that he overhears during the 1984 riots prompts a personal crisis and a detailed unpacking of the earlier trauma. As he recounts the events, he recalls snippets of conversations with relatives and friends that suggest that they, too, had been redefined by their experiences that day.

There were no reliable estimates of how many people were killed in the riots of 1964. The number could stretch from several hundred to several thousand; at any rate not very many less than were killed in the war of 1962. (TSL 253)

The plot of the novel engages readers and deeply resonates for many Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Anyone reading the novel, though, will recognize that its impact can be attributed more to the *manner* of the telling than to the recitation of the events themselves. The Partition, after all,

has been the subject of several very good novels. As Suvir Kaul puts it, though,

The Shadow Lines is an archaeology of silences, a slow brushing away of some of the cobwebs of modern Indian memory, a repeated return to those absences and fissures that mark the sites of personal and national trauma. (qtd.in.Hawley65)

The Shadow Lines in a non-sequential and hesitant journey back and forth to the centre of the trauma – the murder of his uncle that is as remarkable for its psychological sophistication as for the resulting novel's complex theme. It is as much about how the imagination works in managing one's memories as it is about the arbitrary nature of nations and borders, but in *The Shadow Lines* Ghosh has found a wonderful vehicle to merge the two ideas.

Ila, narrator's cousin, has travelled widely and seen a lot of the world, and she lives very decidedly in the present. She is more sophisticated than the narrator, even a bit jaded, but is more than a little insecure in her personal relationship. She is in search of an exclusive personal, social and moral freedom. "Do you see why I've chosen to live in London? It is only because I want to be free. Free of your bloody culture and free of all of you". (TSL 98) Ila longed for Liberalism, Liberty from shackles of culture and customs which delineate an individuals interest. Ila was free from Indian culture and apparently led an existing life abroad.

May and Tridib also strive for a quest that seems elusive. The narrative structure of the novel is complex and at the same time fragmentary. The images of journey are the central of the novel. The movement is from present to past and again to the past to present which enables the novel to achieve the symbolic narrative texture. The story depicts refugees from East Bengal- to cross path with the Prices from London in a period of time which

spans three generations. History including the two world wars, Indian independence and the Hazratbal incident in Srinagar, “On 27 December 1963, two hundred and sixty three years after it has been brought to Kashmir, the Mu-i-Mubarak disappeared from its place in the Hazratbal Mosque”. (TSL 248), 1964 riots in Bangladesh emerges in the stories that are driving forces of the novel. “It’s really very strange that you should remember a riot that happened in Pakistan”.(TSL 247)

“Saturday, 11th January 1964, and sure enough, there it was: a huge banner headline which said: curfew in Calcutta, Police Open Fire, 10 dead, 15 wounded”(TSL 247) Ghosh shows the impact of politics on the lives of ordinary people and human relationship. Historical events have provided Ghosh with raw-material against which he studies the historical truth the meaning of nationalism and political freedom in the modern world.

In the second section the narrator as chronicler tries to understand the various meanings of political freedom, nationalism and partition. Earlier Indian nationalism was a weapon utilized by the freedom fighters in their struggle against foreign rulers. However, this struggle could not even ensure the territorial integrity of India. Partition was viewed as a price of political freedom from British colonial rule. After partition, nationalism in Indian context changes, its meaning to exclude its people on the other side of the border, both East and West Pakistan. So different viewpoints of partition, nationalism and political freedom emerge in the section through the characters.

Ghosh conceives the ideals of freedom on a canvas where political freedom corresponds with the social order and society, in its wider perspective affects man’s urge for freedom against the conventions in which they are destined to survive.

The University communities of both Dhaka and Calcutta took the initiative in doing relief work and organizing peace marches and newspapers on both sides of the border did some fine, human pieces of reporting. As always, there were innumerable cases of Muslims in East Pakistan giving shelter to Hindus, often at the cost of their own lives and equally, in India, of Hindus sheltering Muslims. But they were ordinary people, soon forgotten – not for them and Martyr's Memorials or Eternal Flames.(TSL 253)

The narrator's father and grand mother seldom visited Dhaka again, but stayed in Mandalay. In 1935, grandfather died on pneumonia when grandmother was just thirty two. After partition, she had never returned to the city. She used her degree in history from Dhaka University to get a teaching job.

Tha'mma, could never get the type of freedom she has dreamt of from India's independence. She had to eke out the difficult, connotations of widowhood in the class ridden Hindu society that political independence little altered. She became a foreigner to her own home in Dhaka. Besides, her visit there brought the greatest disaster imaginable – her uncle and nephew were killed by rioters close to their home. The responsibility was largely hers as she has insisted on going there and bringing away her uncle to India. Her uncle on this issue of nationhood and migration expresses just before he was coaxed into living his house strike at essential unsoundness of principles.

I don't believe in this India – Shindia. It's all very well, you're going away now, but suppose when you get there they decide to draw another line somewhere? What will you do then? Where will you move to? No one will have you anywhere. As for me, I was born here, I'll die here (TSL237)

With his imagination enslaved to the idea of nationalism, Grandma couldn't see what was so obvious namely; nationalism had destroyed her home and spilled her innocent kin's blood. The extend of her subjectives can be

grasped by the fact that even after this tragedy she gave away her golden chain, the only ornament she had retained with her after her widowhood as a memento to her dead husband. She was unable to reconcile with Tridib's death, she tells the narrator,

I gave it away, I gave it to the fund for the war. I had to, don't you see? For your sake; for your freedom. We have to kill them before they kill us; we have to wipe them out. (TSL 261)

It is clear that she cares for the ties of blood and nationhood, and is prepared to let go the bitter memories of family feuds. It is interesting to note that the terrorists fascinated her, and she wanted to act like them for her freedom.

The permanent disturbance of partition, that movement which spliced the respective national narratives of India and Pakistan along religious lines, initiates a trauma in the national imagination that has to be repressed; and yet, precisely because of this, religion reappears surreptitiously as an unsettled excess that rustles through the subcontinent's public imagination as an alternative vocabulary by which to articulate identities around which the inevitable disappointments of modern politics can gather.

The situation becomes more serious when one believes one's story to be the only right story and even goes to the extent of taking violent measures to defend it. The kind of militant nationalism idealized by Tha'mma and the communal riot are the two instances in the novel, of the inherent dangers of logo-centricism. Although Tridib defends Tha'mma by saying that she is not a fascist but is only an ordinary modern middle – class woman, the jubilant cries with which she greets the 65 war with Pakistan and the 62 war with China betray a secretly nourished predisposition to violence, bred by logocentric bigotry and dogmatism, which might some day erupt into something similarly devastating. Thus *The Shadow Lines* offers penetrating critiques of nationalism through different characters and situations. The

family joke about Thamma's 'coming home to Dhaka' tellingly unravels the entire construct of the 'nation'. Through an uncritical and naive acceptance of the virtual realities of political lines of control, in her own mind Tha'mma alienates herself from the place and the people, both of which had been until just recently, 'her own place and countrymen. Because the name 'India' is reserved for just one part of the divided territory, she severs her relationship with the other, believing that an imaginary line can really divide human experience. She feels troubled when she has to mention Dhaka as her birth place. "She liked things to be neat and in place – and at the moment she had not been able to quite understand how her place of birth had come to be so messily at odds with her nationality". (TSL168) when she is informed by her son that "the border isn't on the frontier. It's right inside the airport" (TSL 167) it elicits from her a puzzled reaction, "we're fighting them properly at last, with tanks and guns and bombs", (TSL 261) Tha'mma finds the concept of globalisation offensive. Tha'mma here differentiates between linguistic and provincial frontiers, which are seen as restricting and national boundaries, which are considered to be liberating. Like a proper civil subject, Tha'mma here shows that she has internalised nationalistic discourse only too well.

Another logocentric discourse, shown in the text too have violent consequences, is the discourse of religious intolerance. It was widely propagated that partition would put an end to religious conflicts in the sub continent. Moreover, Tridib has to lay down his life to demonstrate the hollowness of this claim and to prove the meaninglessness of the Partition. Tridib's sacrifice, which is a courting of silence and an obliteration of lines, lays bare the fact that partition has aggravated rather than abated religious conflicts, by coupling it with nationalistic antagonism. The communal riot is indeed a threat to the concept of the nation and it is on account of this that

the state has always been hesitant about maintaining archival records of the same.

over the next few days the riots spread outwards from Khulna into the neighbouring towns and districts and towards Dhaka. Soon Hindu refugees began to pour over the border into India, in trains and on foot. (TSL 252).

Thus, the textual space of *The Shadow Lines* shows that every form of logocentrism proves disastrous. Tha'mma is shattered once her nationalistic zeal takes away Tridib's life, the old Jethamoshai and Khalil also lose their lives in the communal frenzy.

The novel reveals that the identities for which people have spilled their blood are shifting, affected by the aspirations of the people themselves, and that boundaries are capable of being redrawn. Nor is this insight to be dismissed as some purely theoretical observations. The contingencies of history mean that Dhaka is in three different states during the course of the narrative: British India in 1939, Pakistan in 1964 (When Tridibdies) and Bangladesh at the time of the narration (1980s). Indeed the communal clashes that kill Tridib reveal Dhaka never to have been more closely united to Sri Nagar, a place hundreds of miles away in the west of India, part of a different state, than after two countries have been partitioned. Just as the grand mother and her sister Mayadebi became fascinated with the upside down house once the family home has been divided, so India and Pakistan are bound ineluctably together by the lines drawn to separate them at the Partition of India.

Ghosh's novel as one might expect of someone trained as an anthropologist – is clearly indebted to Benedict Anderson's overused and sometimes abused idea of nations as "imagined communities. Kaul notes the connection and is inclined to see imagination here as implying that nations

are illusions, but Anderson rejects this definition of imagination early on in his book. The nation is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. For Anderson imagining is not a romantic tool of transcendence but part of what human beings do to make sense of their world. Nevertheless, as Dipesh Chakrabarty has pointed out, Anderson's use of the word imagination does seem conditioned by the mentalism of its western origins, that is, it does not entirely shake itself free at an age-old distinction between the observing mind and the surrounding world. Possibility Anderson does not give enough attention to imagining as a form of cultural practice rather than mere imaging.

The very title of *The Shadow Lines* relates to a key concern of post colonialism that is of borders and boundary lines and their illusionary nature. The title emphasizes on obscurity of existing borders. Postcolonial criticism examines man made borders as efforts to identify a particular group as against another group. Ghosh in *The Shadow Lines* seems to move effortlessly across national boundaries as Robert Dixon puts it "a culture rooted in a single place but a discursive space that flows across political and national boundaries, and even across generations in time" (qtd. in Sharma¹⁴) Dixon's remark refers to obscure lines of the title *The Shadow Lines* which are far more than just the margin created by politicians.

Finally, then, *The Shadow Lines* builds up its critique of cultural borders upon the notion of universal humanity. In so doing, it parallels Edward Said's work in *Orientalism* (1978). Said's project was to counter the production of discrete, essentialized, racial collectivities – particularly 'the Arab' – with the idea of a shared humanity. Yet as James Clifford pointed out in his review, this rests upon a humanism entirely at odds not just with

Said's chief theoretical debt to Foucault, but with the perspective of much recent work in anthropology. *The Shadow Lines* shares these theoretical, difficulties, apparently replacing the notion of discrete national cultures with an untheorized and utopian belief in a common humanity. In this celebration of syncretic civilization, Ghosh has moved further in the direction of global theory than in *The Circle of Reason*, where the flow of trade was over determined by an asymmetrical economy of power that favoured Western interests.

The diasporic sensibility is valuable for attempting to bridge cultures through the widening of experience. Experience can be widened but bridging cultures for one who has been away from his motherland is difficult. In this endeavour, the diasporan suffers from a sense of loss and alienation. A postcolonial reconstruction of *The Shadow Lines* reveals this sense of loss and alienation. Diaspora can emerge from a growing sense of ethnic consciousness which is reflected in postcolonial fiction. James Procter says:

Diasporas are more commonly associated with movements through and between locations, and even with dislocation. In fact, the concept of diaspora has been developed by many post colonial critics to challenge the supremacy of national paradigms. In post colonial studies, Diaspora can appear both as naming a geographical phenomenon the traversal of physical terrain by an individual or a group as well as a theoretical concept: a way of thinking, or of representing the world. (qtd in.Sharma 135)

Hence, the word Diaspora refers to the 'movement of people from any nation or group away from their own country' It is also a dispersion or scattering of national or religious groups living outside their homeland and maintaining their cultural identity. Bhim Singh Dhiya also says: 'Diasporic writing draws our attention to an important aspect of our era in which responsibilities go across national boundaries'(qtd.in.Sharma 135)

In the West, migrants have achieved a number of cultural rights through the policies of multiculturalism. In the Western countries, policies have been framed for the benefit of diasporic communities but the political and cultural effects of being called the Diasporas are different in South East Asia. In case of migrant and displaced Indians from Pakistan and Bangladesh, a feeling of nostalgia and a yearning for crossing ‘the shadow lines’ of etched – out borders is reflected in recent Indian and South-East Asian literature. The core features of the Indian Diaspora is its collective imagining of India – of emotions, links, traditions, feelings and attachments that together continue to nourish a psychological appeal among successive generations of emigrants for the mother country. The partition of Bengal turned the people of Bengal, whether Hindus or Muslims, nostalgic and diasporic. Amitav Ghosh through his characters gives a lyrical expression to his diasporic imagination in *The Shadow Lines*.

Alka Kumar’s essay *Nation, As identity* brings out the inherent difficulty involved in treating an unstable and complex concept as nation, we can talk about the nation only in a tentative way. However, we may look at the issue from a cultural perspective. At least, Tha’mma’s nationality and individual identity may be constructed through such an approach, but our hope is belied, as towards the end of the novel Tha’mma is seen trying hard to understand her predicament. To her chagrin, she discovers that her place of birth is messily at odds with her nationality.

To the question of nationalism and nation is connected the question of political freedom. It was expected that the freedom won in 1947 would create a perfect order, but unfortunately it has generated animosity and hatred in our polity. In the name of freedom, what have got created are the shadow lines or the barriers between the communities and the nation-states. It has led to ‘displacement and dispossession’ and large scale communal

violence; even the individual and national identities have got messed up. In such a bleak scenario, freedom appears as a mirage.

Partition continues to remain as an open chapter in the journey of this independent but divided sub-continent. The traumatic process of displacement contains within it the destruction lived space, cultural practice and social ties; The question of survival, struggles and the *concomitant* – violence with respect to refugee conditions raise some important issue pertaining to politicized state policies and strategic rehabilitation programmes. The construction of the sharp borders that was is inviolable for the partitioned communities in both emotional and material dimensions heightens the gravity of displacement and resettlement.

The issues that the novelist unequivocally advocates in this novel are pluralism, social harmony, cosmopolitan, consciousness and freedom of expression. The Novelist does not believe in unnecessary and meaningless apotheosis of regional culture. Tridib has no sense of nationalism but only a cosmic consciousness that he belongs to human family. Tridib is a mouthpiece character of Amitav Ghosh who resists everything and anything which is authoritarian and totalitarian; who always stands up against all which threaten or endanger pluralism or the beauty of multiethnicity. He does not want any cultural or racial hegemony to be established. He wants to welcome the wind coming to him from all the directions of the world. India has a pluralistic or multiethnic society which presents a lesson to different homogeneous countries of living together with differences and not only living but also enjoying those differences. But this pluralism which is the character of Indian society has always been under threat since India got its independence. Tridib and May Price who represent humanism according to which man is the highest type of individual in existence and the service of man is the highest religion. Religion to them consists pre-eminently in love admiration, sympathy and sacrifice of man for man.

Ghosh engages with the limits of essentialist nationalism and barriers to empathy across geographical borders. The novel eventuates into a search for the strategies for survival in a violent, hate-filled world of narrow divisions and finds in love and effective antidote to the miasma of ethnic tension. Thus the novel also addresses – the challenge of geographical fluidity and cultural dislocations with a salutary insight into history

The humanism has completely been replaced by nationalism. Apart from communal tension novel also brings out the intense desire to be free from all the hackneyed norms. Quest for self has been a dominant post colonial subject. *The Shadow Lines* has been termed as a quest novel. The novel is based on the Hindu – Muslim riots in the background but the characters in this novel are engaged in the quest of their own. The environment of Diaspora has a bearing on the novel. The quest of each character in the narrative is a search for meaning and diasporic identity.

In brief, *The Shadow Lines* is a representative work of Amitav Ghosh imbued with the postcolonial ambience and atmosphere, tracing and dissecting the meaning of freedom, faith and nationalism. The novel warns the whole Indian subcontinent against the mutilation if religious and sectarian animosity refuses to die down. The author ultimately through the heart wrenching sacrifice of Tridib awfully moralizes the whole mankind to take up it as global responsibility that no one should be maimed in the name of his or her race and religion. The novel along with preserving the humanitarian ideals of sacrifice, sympathy, fraternal feeling, love; raises umpteen questions against the concept of Nationalism (a byproduct of colonialism) which has utterly overshadowed and sidelined humanism.

This essay records into the treatment of history as presented by the shadows in the novel. The technique used is that of the time-slip fantasy. It is sometimes referred to as historical fantasy, time-wrap fantasy, time-travel

or past-time fantasy. Its strong attraction lies partly in the fact that it crosses three distinct genres (fantasy, historical fiction and contemporary realism) and takes the reader to a time that is quite distinct from current time, one that might be perceived as being less complex than today. It enables the reader to step back from contemporary life and see the struggles of human existence from a more distanced, reflective perspective. At the same time, the reader remains fully engaged with the characters and the issues with which the characters are faced. In time-slip fantasy, the travel across time is generally spurred by some unhappiness experienced by the protagonist.

With this perspective it is natural that Amitav Ghosh has combined history, story and narrative into the strings of *Shadows*. The characters are integrated into events which have the capacity to lead to prominent historical event. The stark difference which result *The Shadow Lines* as a novel of intricate relations and not a historical novel lies in the fact that there are two narrators: the grand mother and the narrator. Both have their own views. The historical perspective is much stronger than the contemporary view points. The human relations, their responses to each other's emotions and the outcome, everything has a lead to past events which took place in the history of India.

The Shadow Lines is a story of such demarcation which is vainness because he is in the view that demarcation separates man from man, nation from nation. In modern world the whole world should live together, work in co-operation and have friendly relation. Then only this world can be saved from the impending catastrophe. The story revolves round the theme of nationalism in an increasingly globalize world. What the question rises in the mind of the readers in the real meaning of political liberty and borders which almost seem both institution and division.

The text deals with the concerns of our period, the search of identity, the need for independence, the difficult relationship with colonial culture. *The Shadow Lines* interweaves fact, fiction and reminiscences. It is a continuous narrative which replicates the pattern of violence not only of 1964 but also of 21st century.

The novel deals with insecurities in the survival of human race. As the title suggests *The Shadow Lines* centers on the shadowiness of existing borders that divide people. *The Shadow Lines*, written by Amitav Ghosh, was published in 1988 and welcomed by the whole world with open arms and warm hug. The novel deals with the memories which remained forever in the minds of those who witnessed all these horror, terror and violence, caused by the partition of India.

To Anu Chopra *The Shadow Lines* is a “powerful adolescent love story and the story of unrequited love”. According to Nutan Damor, it is a novel “about Partition and immigration. Novy Kapadia describes it as “a critique of certain issues such as time, freedom and history”. To Nirzari Pandit – “the need for a syncretic civilization to avoid a communal conflict”.

Alpana Neogy compares *The Shadow Lines* with Sunil Gangopathyay’s *Purba Paschim* and finds that both the novels focus on the partition of India and consequent trauma of East Bangali Psyche. She is of the opinion that the agonies of displacement, the sense of alienation in the adopted land and constant dream of a return to one’s land are the common themes in both the novels.

A few Calcutta dailies printed the pictures of weeping Hindu refugees along with the accounts of the events took place in East Pakistan and there was a rumour in Calcutta that:

Hindu refugees began to pour over the border into India, in trains and on foot, The towns and cities of East Pakistan were now in the grip of a frenzy of looting killing and burning. (TSL 252)

Though so, the stray incidents of looting, burning and killing went on for a week. But the reliable estimates of how many people killed in riot of 1964 are not there. The number of the dead could not be less than the people killed in the war of 1962.

The leaders like Maulana Masoodi are now forgotten. Only those leaders came ahead who had partitioned the country on the basis of religion only for their own benefits. It was in 1979; fifteen years later the narrator could find that there was a connection between his nightmare bus-ride back from school and the events that killed Tridib and others in Dhaka. He say:

Every word I write about those events of 1964 is the product of a struggle with silence. It is a struggle I am destined to lose—have already lost – for even after all these years, I do not know where within me, in which corner of my world, this silence lies. All I know of it is what it is not. It is not, for example, the silence of an imperfect memory. Nor is it a silence enforced by a ruthless state – nothing like that, no barbed wire, no check points to tell me where its boundaries lie. I know nothing of this silence except that it lies out side the reach of my intelligence, beyond words (TSL 240)

The narrator is of the opinion that he has no words to describe the riot and the death of Tridib. But he says:

I believed in the reality of nations and borders; I believed that across the border there existed another reality. The only relationship my vocabulary permitted between those separate realities was war or friendship (TSL 241)

Like many other novels *The Shadow Lines* deals with the theme of partition and the communal conflict. It deals with the causes and effect of riots spread in North India.

Amitav Ghosh the most contemporary and convincing Indian voice in literature, seems more intellectual in his *The Shadow Lines* which makes impossible co-existences and disrupted metaphysical boundaries into real struggles both for its narrator and its readers. The blurred boundaries are mere a pseudo-treatment of politics but at last all boundaries seem to be same when it is the question of their existence. The deeply etched man-made lines separating nations, people, events can be blurred into Shadow Lines where there is universal brotherhood and love. This novel makes a unique contribution to the debates over ‘differences’ and otherness that have galvanized the contemporary post colonial world.

The Shadow Lines is a text of the post colonial genre that seeks to reconstruct history and it has placed Amitav Ghosh among the leading Indian novelists in post colonial literature. Having penned several novels, Ghosh’s seen to reinvent himself with his every work but this novel undoubtedly remains one his best. He has also been hailed as the most cosmopolitan among the contemporary Indian writers

CHAPTER 4

A UNIVERSAL STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

Amitav Ghosh is one of the most widely known Indian writer, is a serious novelist and anthropologist writing from a postcolonial consciousness. He belongs to the nation that was once conquered and ruled by imperial Britain. As a writer, Amitav Ghosh has been immensely influenced by the political and social milieu of the country. Also the stories and events he heard from his parents during his childhood made an indelible impression on his mind. His mother grew up in Calcutta and her memories were of Mahatma Gandhi, non-violence and disobedience and the terrors that accompanied partition in 1947. His father worked in the British colonial army in India and his stories were of the war and of his fellow Indians who fought loyally beside the British. The Image of the changing India, politically and socially, cast a deep shadow on Ghosh's mind.

Amitav Ghosh in his writings seems to believe that an effective fiction emanates from a particular historical movement which intersects the narrator and the nation at the crucial point of their evolution and growth. As Devy says "Alienation between speech and life seems to have disappeared now" and so story tellers like Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh almost are poets enjoying their poetic rhetoric. (Jha 231) Ghosh uses English language skillfully and artistically to present the narrator and what is peculiar of Ghosh's novels is that he varies his choice of narrator in each of his novels. Being an anthropologist himself, Ghosh takes the readers through many parts of the work. He wanders through the ancient land of Egypt as well as the war ravaged London during the Second World War, through Dhaka before and after Partition. Coming and going, arriving and departing find a frequent place in his fiction. This is not merely a geographical and physical

movement but also a movement from ignorance to knowledge, awareness and understanding. The novelist has a roving eye and perceives in depth the events of the world.

Behind all these, it is Ghosh the anthropologist who has decisively shaped his focus as a novelist and has engaged him in the task of putting the individual back in the centre of the narrative, to save him from getting lost in hegemonic narrative of the nation. In an interview with John.C.Hawley in 2004, he categorically states “My fundamental interest is in people – in individuals and their specific predicaments: If history is of interest to me it provides instances of unusual and extraordinary predicaments”. (Hawley 6) Particularly concerned with the South Asian diaspora in the different regions of the world, Ghosh has set himself the task of narrating an anti-Hegelian history of the world, incorporating the hitherto left out narratives of the common individuals, the predicament of individuals against the historical backdrop, their attempt to resist the hegemony, of the nation through their own stories and the search for their own identity. In the essay, *The Ghost of Mrs. Gandhi*, Ghosh writes:

It is when we think of the world the aesthetic of indifference might bring into being that we recognize the urgency of remembering the stories we have not written (qtd. in Ghosh.T.K143)

Ghosh writes this in 1995 and later, in an interview conducted by Sajal Kumar Bhattacharya on 13th March 2009. Ghosh seems to reiterate the importance of the individual over the nation’s history with equal emphasis.

the same history does not create the same individual, and that is what is interesting about it. History remains at the background, but hundred different individuals exist living the history in their own ways. An artist aims to bring these different stories of the fore (qtd. in Ghosh.T.K 144).

The existential angst of modernist fiction is replaced in the post colonial novel by a phenomenon one might call exist-ential anxiety. Diaspora takes the place of doubt and homelessness becomes the principle trope, typifying a historical condition as well as a state of mind. When Rushdie's narrator in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* dubs himself a 'photographer of exits' it is exactly this paradox to which he refers - of having to capture individuals and populations at the very moment that they are about to move out of a frame.

Colonialism had movement build into its definition: troops on the march, drastic changes in administration, large-scale transfers of goods and services and reconfigurations of political boundaries. Any writer who seeks to present the soul of man under colonialism, as Amitav Ghosh does in his novel, *The Glass Palace* is therefore condemned to record the existential dilemma – wherein the subject is necessarily partitioned a bewildered immigrant never quite in focus nor contained within the frame.

Salman Rushdie identifies a narrative impulse to invent 'imaginary homelands' that springs from loss and Amitav Ghosh highlights the family as a central imaginative unit in his fictions. For Rushdie and Ghosh and other South Asian diasporic writers generally, the family and home are central to their crafting of fictional lands. To engage powerfully their readers, such writers employ a variety of narrative points of views, genres, storytelling styles and techniques. They organize their complex fictions not as documents aimed to alter and / or replace reality – the reality say of existing nations – but to enliven the imagination with unreal worlds that cohere. This is not to say that such writers offer escapes into never never lands. It simply means that a writer such as Amitav Ghosh carefully organizes his narrative elements so as to both engage the reader's creativity and simultaneously disengage him from confusing invented worlds with the

world that exists *hors texte*. As Ghosh reminds us, his novels are centrally about family, but its members, their vicissitudes, the setting where they take place, and so on, have nothing to do with real families and everything to do with a very skilled and intellectually captivating narrative style. Ghosh and his fellow writers do not pretend that their novels have the same ontological status and power to alter the world out there as the texts (constitutions, legislations, decrees, treatises, political documents, and etc.), the political institutions (executive, legislative, and judicial powers, political parties, trade unions and etc.), and the people, that have made and maintained nations for centuries. This most obvious clarification seems necessary in view of the opposite notion very widely held by cultural studies practitioners and literary theorists, among others, who read the complexly crafted and imagined postcolonial narrative fictions as *real* or equally reductively as only an allegory of nation. In Ghosh's words, this view is 'lop sided' – and not an 'alert reading'.

Ghosh's characters, in this most capacious of his fictions, literally include both kings (Thebaw, Queen Supalayath, the Burmese Princesses) and commoners (Dolly, Raj Kumar, Saya John, Uma) but what unites them all is the inescapable narrative of colonial displacement. Buffered about by the gale-winds of history, these protagonists are driven from Burma to India, Malaya, Singapore and back again, repeating each time a pattern of action that Ghosh presents in his first few pages.

The Royal Family was being sent into exile. They were to go to India, to a location that had yet to be decided on. The British Government wished to provide them with an escort of attendants and advisors. The matter was to be settled by asking for volunteers. (TGP 41)

One can trace many of the dilemmas that Ghosh addresses in his work to the continuing tradition initiated by the domestication of humanism

in Bengal, and in India generally. It has left a dual legacy that writers such as Ghosh continue to negotiate. On the other hand, the parallel vernacular renaissances of nineteenth century bequeathed the cultural resources that successfully inspired the struggle against colonialism; on the other hand, it was always marked by the humiliation of defeat. For Ghosh, who matured during the period of crisis which marked the dissolution of the renaissances' greatest achievement – the construction of a politically viable Indian nationalism – the sense of pessimism is evident in the recurring references to defeat that are scattered throughout his writings. In the course of an interview discussion about *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh remarked that this has really been our history for a long, long time: the absolute fact of defeat and the absolute fact of trying to articulate defeat to yourself and trying to build a culture around the centrality of defeat.

The Glass Palace is rightly described by John Thieme as a family saga and it is quite lengthy and involved. It deals with a struggling group of races inhabiting British occupied territories in South East Asia. In this fiction, Ghosh weaves into the life of Raj Kumar, his central protagonist, the bewildering and often poignant accounts of a family scattered through post-imperialist dislocation in various parts of the Asian continent. But as Ghosh charts the complex sociological and political repercussions of such disbanding through experiences such as of loss, exile and search for a home, we find him focusing on the mobile contours of home. *The Glass Palace* is set in Burma, Bengal, India and Malaya, spans a century from the fall of the Konbaung Dynasty in Mandalay, through the Second World War to modern times. Focusing mainly on the early 20th century it explores a broad range of issues, ranging from the changing economic landscape of Burma and India, to pertinent questions about what constitutes a nation and how these changes as society is swept along by the tide of modernity. This novel is set against the background of political turmoil resulting from the cruelty and oppression

exercised by the British imperialists, and the attempt to suppress the democratic rights of the people in Burma by the native rulers after its decolonization from the British rule. The novelist's major concern here is to exhibit the obliteration of human rights under the ruthless rulers both the British and the native. In the process, the inhuman treatment meted to the subjects of the British empire and the subjugation of human values in the name of order and national self-assertion by the native rulers brings out the novelist's view of humanism.

The novel opens in Mandalay in 1885; a teenage boy called Rajkumar running through the city to find a woman called Ma Cho. He is the last surviving member of his family and comes to Burma from India with a bright entrepreneurial spirit and a hunger for success. He has already been displaced from its roots. Originally from Chittagong, his father moved his family to Akyab, an important port in Burma. "Their family name was Raha" (TGP13) However, both of Rajkumar's parents die enroute and the mother's dying words to him are: "stay alive, she whispered. Beche thako, Rajkumar live, my prince: hold on to your life" (TGP14)

From this moment till the end of the story, this is exactly what Raj Kumar does – by engaging himself in the task of inventing a family where none exists and by building lasting bonds of trust with strangers – the boat owner, the nakhoda: Ma Cho, a half Indian, half-chinese food stall owner; Saya John Martins, a Chinese Christian contractor: Doh say, an elephant herder working in the teak forests, to name only a few. Through all of this, Raj Kumar engages himself in creating a subjective position and the novel narrates how he, slowly yet steadily, builds his career towards enviable heights of success. His struggle begins the movement his mother leaves him and Ghosh evokes the image of a catfish at this moment to summarize his positions. A catfish is characterized by its power to survive against all odds,

even when there is an absolute scarcity of water. In a similar sense, Rajkumar exhibits ample prudence in his realization that it is futile to go back to Chittagong. Instead, he strikes a bargain with the boat owner with the will to look forward, thus securing membership in a new family (on the boat) in absence of his original one. The boat owner's reading of this resilient boy is a sufficient indication of his future:

The old man looked him over. The boy was strong and willing, and what was more, he had survived the killer fever that had emptied so many of the towns and villages of the coast. That alone spoke of certain useful qualities of body and spirit. He gave the boy a nod and took the bangle – yes, stay. (TGP14)

Rajkumar joints Ma Cho's food stall in the shadow of *The Glass Palace* in which King Thebaw and his wife reside with their daughters. On the occasion of British invasion to topple the incumbent regime, all the citizens of Mandalay took shelter in Royal palace where Rajkumar came in contact to Dolly, one of the assistants of Princess. However the entire Royal Family and their entourage are extradited by British Forces and they have been forced to take shelter miles away on the West Coast of India. Thebaw Palace, Residence of Burmese King exiled in Ratnagiri by British. Rajkumar begins his professional career with Saya John, a successful teak merchant. After his exile in Ratnagiri, at Outram House King Thebaw is revered by local community and provide with social and political communities. The authority of New Collector of Ratnagiri generates the feeling of resentment towards colonial authority but Collector's wife, Uma develops amicable relations with Dolly. Raj Kumar in his enterprise witnessed the hardships of teak trade and also witnessed the dehumanization of humanity in the form of man and beast working together: he found the exploitation of natural resources in the form of the transport of large volumes of wood from the forests of Burma for the sale in British markets. Adhering the mechanism of British rulers, Rajkumar also under the advise of Doh Say, borrowing money

from Saya John, makes his journey to India to recruit poverty stricken village dwellers into the lucrative world of oil-mining in Burma. With his mercantile success, he nurtures the dream of buying a timber yard of his own. With commercial empires, he begins his journey to find out Dolly. During his visit to India, through Collector's wife Uma, Rajkumar happened to meet Dolly and persuaded her for marriage and returned with her to Burma. Saya John on their return presents Raj Kumar and Dolly a small clump of rubber trees to ensure better security to them. In the subsequent part of the novel, Amitav Ghosh presents elaborate analysis of multi-ethnic families in Calcutta. After travelling through time and space, Ghosh broods over the loss of lives, and properties with the psychological anguish of scattered families.

Saya John and Raj Kumar's latest commercial venture was the growing of rubber trees, and they had established a plantation on Penang island. Dolly gives birth to Neeladhri and after four years to her second son Dinu. After twenty years Uma meets Dolly with her two sons at the rubber plantation at Morning side House. In this span of time, Uma had transformed herself into a political force and she follows Gandhi's non violent methods.

Uma's nephew Arjun enters the Indian Military Academy in Dehra Dun and happily finds an identity there. A Romance blossoms between Uma's niece, Manju and Rajkumar's son and they are soon married.

The pace of events in the novel begins to accelerate. Back in Europe, Britain is declaring war on Germany. Raj Kumar interprets the enforced rest as an occasion to reassess his businesses and decides to sell his properties before things become dangerous in Burma. Ever the businessman, he decides to sell all his assets to finance the purchase of great quantities of timber. Alison meanwhile receives word that her parents, Mathew and Elsa, have died in a car crash in the Cameron Highlands. Dinu is interested in

photography, arrives at Morning side House and strikes up a friendship with Alison. Neel has taken over management of his father's attempt to sell his properties and buy timber and has met with success. All Rajkumar's funds have been invested in one plantation, and when the Japanese bomb nearby, the elephants panic: Neel is crushed to death and the trees are destroyed in the melee. Rajkumar has lost everything-Neel and the money. Having waited too long, Manju, Dolly, Rajkumar and the baby now trying to get away. They join some thirty thousand refugees who are trying to cross the river. In her own despair at the loss of Neel, Manju quietly slips beneath the surface and drowns herself. She had recognized that Dolly and Rajkumar were a different breed of individuals – hungry for life – and she knew her baby would learn to grasp life far better from their ageing hands.

After staying for the next six years in Uma's flat Dolly travels to Rangoon hoping to locate Dinu. She never sees Rajkumar again. In 1996, Jaya is a college Professor and her college sends her to an art history conference at the University of Goa. While there, she meets a "pioneering photographer from the early years of the century" and discovers that he is infact, her uncle Dinu. Though he is now eighty-two years old, she decides to visit him, and finds that he works in a studio he calls 'The Glass Palace'.

The Glass Palace, follows the track of historical exploitation of ethnic communities, the current of the national consciousness in the form of resistance against imperialism and finally acknowledging and registering the voice of those who are par victims of colonial authority.

those heretics, the barbarian English kalaas having most harshly made demands calculated to bring about the impairment and destruction of our religion, the violation of our national traditions and customs and the degradation of our race, are making a show and preparation as if about to wage war with our state. (TGP15)

This display of the horrors of the shadows of war encouraged him to assimilate his inner strength to resist the forces of domination and imperialism. The deadly invasion of English forces even shakes the foundation of Burmanian Royal family. Englishmen construct their authority through their power on the royal authorities. British army conquered the cities. Queen was almost made a prisoner under the pressure of British army and the king was left for surrender. Rajkumar in his reflections on the idea of brutality points out that poverty and money are the two major instruments of power. Even Indians join English army for a few coins. “For a few coins they would allow their masters to use them as they wished, to destroy every trace of resistance to the power of the English”, (TGP 29) Imperial authority is a sign of compromise with national patriotic identity. Such type of subjugation by colonial subjects is called an innocent evil.

After the victory of Britishers, Royal family was uprooted and was exiled to be located in India. Ghosh presents a detailed account along with geographical details of the exodus of the royal family. For Queen Supayalat and her attendants it was not the shift of the location only but the shift cultural upbringing to be rooted in alien soil. This sort of cultural trauma has been defined by the critic like Home Babha as agonistic uncertainty.

The success of Saya John and Rajkukmar is based on a shrewd appraisal of the rules of the colonial game. In particular, it is their ability to absorb the colonial worldview, to subject themselves to its hegemony, that enables them to ascend to the pinnacles of colonial society. The novel signifies this through its attention to clothing as a marker of identity and attitude. Rajkumar is a reinvented migrant, who left to himself, has been able to find a place in the new society by dint of his enterprise, under the assumption that he will be soon absorbed into and by the established cultural order. He thus escapes ending up in underclass or ethnic ghettos. The story

of Rajkumar, therefore, is another way in which Ghosh addresses the vital problematic of the settling and resettling of communities and individuals amidst the confluence of nations and nationalities that are able together in the half-light of foreign tongues.

Rajkumar is a self made man, with absolute command over his life (like a prince, he is the monarch of all that he surveys). Soon, he secures a position in Burma, turning this place of exile into a favorable land of fortune. From a mere crew member on a boat, he becomes a rich and powerful member of the Indian community in Burma, through the spoils of trade in teak, rubber and slaves. But his hard-headed preoccupation with business does not deter him from his romantic pursuits. This leads him to track down Dolly and marry her through Uma's good offices. There are, therefore, clearly two components in the story of Rajkumar's success.

In that instant there flashed before Saya John's eyes a clear vision of that Mandalay morning when he had gone racing down an alley to rescue Rajkumar – he saw him again as a boy, an abandoned kalaa, a rags-clad Indian who had strayed too far from home. Already then, the boy had lived a lifetime, and from look of him now it was clear that he was embarking on several more. (TGP132)

On the other hand, he has been instinctively drawn to create a family through the bonds of blood, a familial space around him, populated by his wife Dolly and their sons, Neel and Dinu. It is for the nourishment of this familial space that Rajkumar works like a giant, undertaking schemes to earn more money, in order to sustain the family he has created. On the other hand, he creates innumerable families outside the bonds of blood, sometimes out of professional necessity, some times out of sheer instinct. Illongo, his son outside the bond of marriage, may be Rajkumar's illegal child, but he points to be irresistible bonds that his father creates in various places. This is how Rajkumar's life becomes intertwined with the lives of Uma, Saya John

and Doh Say like a spider web – a still centre from where shimmering strands radiate in various directions. It is this ability to forge his subjective identity in innumerable foreign spaces, along with the instinctive foresight characteristic of a successful businessman and the never say - die attitude that he takes to life that breeds in him a diasporic hope that sees him through all his many dislocations. This ability is so deeply embedded in him, that it does not leave him even at the most difficult moments of his life, when he takes part in the soul destroying long march from Burma to India, after losing his son and his estate to the war. This is the secret of Rajkumar's success.

A degree of moral and psychological complication is finally introduced by Uma as she returns from New York. Like many Indians abroad, Uma has had a painful political awakening to the degraded state of India and Indians under British rule. She is the first truly modern individual in Ghosh's narrative, in contrast to Rajkumar, who has simply lost sight of what he was doing and why? Uma too, is a citizen of the world. The grand European tour opens her to another bigger and more fascinating world. Though she is later caught up in the Indian nationalist cause and is part of the subcontinent's intelligentsia in a peculiar way, she is still more than just a colonized native. She is more of a hybrid colonized subject who does not meet the notion of exile head on, for her hybrid nature both depletes the term 'exile' of its older paradigm of oppression and introduces to the experience of postcoloniality, a dimension wherein the colonized / colonizer binary is sufficiently diluted.

the men looked to me to be a kind of ideal woman, a symbol of purity – and to tell you the truth, I didn't much mind. That's the thing about politics – once you get involved in it, it pushes everything else out of your life. (TGP224)

One of the leading characters in *The Glass Palace* is Arjun, a middle class Bengali, who was an officer in the British Indian Army, has learned to dance the tango and to eat roast beef with a knife and fork. The interesting component of the novel is his relation with his subordinate Kishen Singh. Arjun's entry into the Military Academy at Dehradun, prompted by the notion of passionate service to his country, receives a rude jolt in his colleague Hardy's ironic reduction of it:

this country whose safety, honour and welfare are to come first, always and every time – what is it? Where is this country? The fact is that you and I don't have a country – so where is this place whose safety, honour and welfare are to come first, always and every time? And why was it that when we took our oath it wasn't to a country but to the King Emperor to defend the Empire? (TGP 330).

Arjun is the brother of Manju, Rajkumar and Dolly's daughter – in – law and also the nephew of Uma Dey, Arjun also represents a colonized subject whose world is destroyed in the aftermath of defeat. Having been selected in the army and trained to live his life like the whites, he does not identify with his own culture and people whom he regards as slaves and poor. Fascinated by the white's culture, he dresses up like the whites and behaves like them.

Arjun is so attached to his job that he considers it a mission or a goal of life. They are to prove, to themselves as well as to their superiors that they are eligible to be rulers, to qualify as members of the elite. They have vision enough to rise above the ties of their soil,

‘Look at us’! Arjun would say, we're the first modern Indians, the first Indians to be truly free. We eat what we like we drink what we like, we're the first Indians who're not weighed down by past. We're the ones who actually live with westerners. (TGP 279)

The collector clearly prefigures Arjun, a character whose ethical dilemmas as a soldier echo his mythical namesake from *The Mahabharata* whose pauses in battle to question the purpose of war and the kingdom he is fighting for. The development of Arjun from loyal colonial subject to rebel soldier is the narrative centre-piece of the novel, its ideological core, and whilst the mythical Arjun eventually decides to follow the path of duty. *The Glass Palace* illustrates how for the latter day Arjun duty is itself split, torn by colonialism into a dual, duplicitous, allegiance. The novel chooses to explore the effects of colonial hegemony by focusing on the British Indian Army because it is there that the contradictions of colonial ideology were most acutely felt. Ghosh observes in an essay that foreshadowed *The Glass Palace*, the rebellion of soldiers like Arjun who eventually joined the forgotten Indian National Army was not based on some nativist allegiance to the core Indian identity but rather emerged out of their personal experience of these contradictions.

In one of many postcolonial manoeuvres in this novel, Ghosh has the King ponder his fate and the fate of empires as he is on his way into exile. In Rangoon, where the British had transported almost more Indians than there were Burmese, the King pauses to think on his way to exile in India.

The King raised his glasses to his eyes and spotted several Indian faces, along the waterfront. What vast, what incomprehensible power, to move people in such huge numbers from one place to another – emperors, kings, farmers, dockworkers, soldiers, coolies, policemen, why? Why this furious movement – people taken from one place to another, to pull rickshaws, to sit blind in exile? (TGP 50)

The fate of exiles of various sorts recurs in Ghosh's writing as an inscrutable problem in history.

The pivotal figure of Rajkumar in *The Glass Palace* now seems as an in-text metaphor for Ghosh's own authorial persona, as he perceives himself. Like Ghosh, Rajkumar is a boundary crosser, who makes several transitions across national frontiers during his life-time but he is also a man so absolutely focused that he creates his own destiny, his own history. Rajkumar's symbolic as well as real orphan-hood implies that he has to invent a family where none exists; he has to build lasting bonds of trust with strangers. Structurally, that is, the unfolding of this novel is associated with the enfolding of family and friends around the central character. As the chief protagonist of the novel, Rajkumar has in effect to solve the same dilemma that confronts the postcolonial author. He has actually to discover his lineage by achieving creative harmony out of the materials of historical dissension and resentment; and he has to make sense of the existential conundrum that plagues all individuals who cross, for one reason to another, the well defined lines of national identity and family genealogy.

A specific concern for human freedom and dignity in Ghosh's understanding of humanism emerges from his rejection of colonial practices. The concept of the equality of all human beings irrespective of their nationality, religion, caste, culture or social and political status gains supreme significance in Ghosh's humanistic views. In order to express his concern Ghosh has given fictional expression to the practices that block human freedom and tend to subjugate man/woman. The dehumanizing behaviour of the rulers has been presented through the treatment of their subjects by them.

These girls were very young, mostly in their early teens, and they were almost all orphans. They'd been purchased by the Queen's agents in small Kachins, Wa and Shan villages along the kingdom's northern frontier. (TGP 20)

In *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh sketches something akin to a pre-history of nationalism in Asia by dramatizing its emergence in the context of the upheavals engineered by war and conquest on the one hand, and trade and economic exploitation on the other. It is not without significance: therefore, that the main narrative takes place between 1885 and 1942. The former date is, of course, when Britain conquered Burma, annexed it into its Indian empire and sent its King into exile.

This is what they have done to us, this is what they will do to all Burma. They took our kingdom, promising roads and railways and ports. In a few decades, the wealth will be gone – all the gems, timber and the oil – and then they too will leave. In our golden Burma where no one ever went hungry and no one was too poor to write and read, all that will remain is destitution and ignorance, famine and despair (TGP 88).

However 1885 also coincides with the formation of the Indian National Congress, which would become one of the principal vehicles of anti-colonial resistance and national liberation. At the other end of the main narrative, 1942 coincides with the Quit India movement, the final and decisive push towards independence organized by Congress and the last of the three great civil disobedience agitations led by Mahatma Gandhi.

Is that Mr. Gandhi heads the loyal opposition. Like many other Indians he's chosen to deal with the Empire's velvet glove instead of striking at its iron fist. He cannot see that the Empire will always remain secure while its Indian soldiers remain loyal. The Indian army will always put down opposition wherever it occurs - not just in India, but also in Burma, Malaya, East Africa, no matter where.(TGP 223)

In that sense, then, it constitutes if not the end then at least the beginning of the end of British colonialism in Asia.

Within the context of a grand historical defeat, then, *The Glass Palace* explores the complex dynamics of collaboration, complicity and

resistance to colonialism, and its aftermath. Its characters' identities and motivations, their ideas and desires are shown to be shot through with tensions as they negotiate their sense of self and evaluate their place in the colonial scheme of things. In documenting this complexity, and in its gathering together an abundance of achievements and disappointments, joys and sorrows, in short in attesting to the multi-dimensional experience of life in a colonial milieu, this most humanist of Ghosh's novels tries to salvage a small measure of redemption from the existential wreckage of defeat.

The dynamics that shape the characters' lives in *The Glass Palace* are played out in both the economic and political fields. Indeed, the novel demonstrates how the economic and the political were two sides of the same colonial coin and it explicitly figures economic exploitation of land, resources and people as a counterpart of political oppression. This is evident in the novel's representations of various spaces that are linked together by colonial power on the one hand and the capitalist economy on the other. The meticulous description of the Burmese interior - its jungle, its villages, its lifestyles –that accompany the equally exhaustive accounts of the timber industry are paralleled by the fastidious descriptions of the Morningside estate in Malay, and the logistics of the rubber plantation. Indeed, trees are a significant motif in the novel and, in a sense; they stand as surrogates for the colonized peoples with whom they share the environment. Ghosh illustrates how this environment is exploited, but he also documents its resistance. The symbolic dimension of these spaces is evident when Mathew tells Uma, by then a prominent nationalist leader, that the estate is “This is my little empire. There is law there's order, everything is well run. It's nature. The nature that made these trees and the nature that made us” (TGP 233).

The Glass Palace explores the interplay through a minor but nevertheless audible and significant chord that echoes throughout the novel-

the concept of *home*. Home is one of the most powerful metaphors of identity, and the relationship it signals with place – where we feel ourselves to be the most ‘at home’ – makes it one of the key terms in the nationalist lexicon. To migrate – to move from one home to another – renders that relationship unstable. In the narrative so full of journeys, it is unsurprising that *home* should be displaced so many times. Rajkumar a young Bengal orphan comes to see Burma as his home, after her marriage, Manju moves from Calcutta to Rangoon. But it is perhaps Dolly who most of all exemplifies the portability of identity through the multiple locations to her home – she is brought from native village to the court of Mandalay, which she comes to think of ‘home’ after nearly twenty years in exile, she comes to feel that Outram House is ‘this is home to me’ (TGP 112) and that “If I went to Burma now I would be a foreigner” (TGP 113)

On her return to Rangoon, Kemendine House becomes her home. These displacements disrupt the settled geographies of the self imposed by national traditions and undermine the belief that identity is rooted in a particular place. Perhaps nothing illustrates this better than the ironic reversal of attachments exemplified by the turn of events following the King’s death: of the four Princesses, the two who’d been born in Burma both chose to live on in India. Their younger sisters, on the other hand, both born in India, chose to settle in Burma.

O ‘Memmi’ in Prospero and Caliban defines colonial authorities as *misanthropic neurosis* in which natives suffer with dependency complex. Europeans with urge for power control frames the personality of native with uncompromising inferiority complex. Fanon in *Black Skins, White Masks* indicates the psychological implications of colonialism. Fanon admits, “the settler paints the natives as a sort of quintessence of evil, insensible to ethics a negation of values.” He admits that dependency complex is not the *cause*

but the effect of colonialism. The reactionary psychosis is a result of oppression. Colonial oppression subsequently constructs the vision of national consciousness and self-identity. Culture associated with nation becomes the source of identity.

Arjun pleads for the adoption of modernization in attitude and encourages the values of rational insight into the working and calculated party politics of the west. Ghosh is convinced that the transformation of consciousness is essential to escape the power of domination of Europeans. The construction of the consciousness against oppressive mechanism and discrimination fires the vision of resistance. “Hardy’s answer was: have you ever seen an Indian soldier using an umbrella? I thought about it and realized I hadn’t. I said ‘No’....Because in the old days in the East, umbrellas were a sign of sovereignty. The British didn’t want their sepoys to get over ambitious. That’s why you’ll never see umbrellas at a cantonment”. (TGP285)

He no longer intends to survive under the cover of British Umbrella. Ghosh like a perfect post colonial thinker seems to agree with Meenakshi Mukerjee who admits that colonialism more than being a political phenomenon is a manifestation of the dearth of self strength.

In *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh also highlights how the control over economic resources, strengthens the courage of Britishers to entangle the colonies like Burma in the process of world war. Rajkumar in spite of his indignation of British powers is coined that in absence of British empire Burma’s economy would have been collapsed. Rajkumar Dinu, Arjun, Manju, Alison, all find themselves insecure and homeless. The possibilities of dismantling of rubber Plantation Empire and the separation of family make them helpless. It was a bitter disgust for Arjun that in spite of liberal and dedication for British Army and their commanding officer had very low

opinions about Indian officials and they used to call them ‘Coolies’ and threaten with a swaggering stick. The reference of Malaya and Burma led to the loss of properties, loss of lives and the loss of families and personal relationships. The deadly display of the horrible shadows of war makes Arjun and Hardy instable and insecure about their role and position as an officer serving in British Indian Army.

what was India to them? This land whose freedom they were fighting for, this land they’d never seen, but for which they were willing to die? Did they know of the poverty, of the hunger their parents and grandparents had left behind ? they had never experienced it and could not imagine it. India was the shining mountain beyond the horizon, a sacrament of redemption – a metaphor for freedom in the same way that slavery was a metaphor for the plantation. What would they find, Arjun wondered when they crossed the horizon? (TGP 522)

In the last section of the novel *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh tries to reconstruct the life of those who witnessed the horrors of world war. For the soldiers of Indian National Army it was an utter disillusionment and they were unable to identify themselves with the either of the countries.

They were fighting for a country they had never seen; a country that had extruded their parents and cut them off. This made their fervor all the more remarkable. Why? What were their motivations? There was so much about their lives that he, Arjun, didn’t know and could not fathom- the way they talked about slavery for instance, always using the English word. At first Arjun had thought that they were using the term loosely, as a kind of metaphor – for after all, it wasn’t true technically that they were slaves. (TGP 521, 522)

This novel is a comprehensive poetics of the voyage from colonization to decolonization but the construction of an absolute and exclusive decolonized consciousness contains the seeds of the annihilation

of natural identity itself. Ghosh adopts a dynamic approach of reconcile the seemingly hostile image of colonization and decolonization.

A lot of research has gone into the making of the book. The Author's Note clearly states the genesis of the novel;

The seed of this book was brought to India long before my own life time by my father and my uncle, the late Jaggat Chandra Datta of Rangoon and Moulmein "The Prince" as he was known to his relatives. But neither my father nor my uncle would have recognized the crop that I have harvested. By the time I started work on this book, the memories they had handed on to me had lost their outlines, surviving often only as patterns of words, moods, textures. In attempting to write about places and times that I knew only at second and third hand, I found myself forced to create a parallel, wholly fictional world. *The Glass Palace* is thus unqualifiedly a novel and I can state without reservation that except for King Thebaw, Queen Supayalat and their daughters, none of its principal characters bear any resemblance to real people, living or deceased. (Das 61)

The novel reveals how tactfully the British conquered countries and subjugated whole population exiling kings to erase them completely from public memory at home: The last of Mughal King, Bahadur Shah Zafar, deportation to Rangoon, a generation ago, after killing two Princes right in front of the public, and the Burmese king Thebaw and Queen Supayalat's exile to Rathnagiri in India were such astute moves by the conquering Britain. Having forced the rulers into a life of obscurity, they freely plundered the Burmese natural resource, like the teak, ivory and petroleum.

Rajkumar's life-story is a story of the struggle for survival in the colonial turmoils. Ghosh writes about families and nations to highlight the sense of dislocation. He asks questions of national identity – cultural and political in right contexts. Brinda Bose comments that *The Glass Palace* signals a dislocation in our understanding of the myth of our so-called

community:(qtd. in. Chitra) The human interest is predominant in this novel, under the spell of colonialism. The journey man is elsewhere on the silk route of memory. A lone man in the province of orphaned mysteries, of antique anthologies of existence, he is the redeemer as well as the victim. Redeemer, because he happens to be the chosen child of renewal. The social chaos in Burma during the colonial days is one of its threads. Different strands of history of King Thebaw, Dolly and Rajkumar are woven; in this saga of family matters.

Ghosh describes the aspirations, defeats and disappointments of the dislocated people in India, Burma, China, Malaysia and America such as King Thebaw, Queen Supayalat, Saya John, Rajkumar, Dolly, Uma, Alison, Dinu, Neel, Arjun, Hardy, Kishan Singh, Jaya and Ilango.

This novel is about many places, war and displacement, exile and rootlessness, depicting human helplessness. All that a human being can do is to try to adjust, compromise, live and about everything else form relationships. Benedict Anderson in his essay “The origin of Nationalism” defines the Nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. (Anderson 50). But the characters in the novel are not representatives of a particular nation but as individuals. Their identities are seen not with their nationalistic approach but as individuals who are in search of their own identities, locating themselves in a space where they feel contented by displacing themselves away from the nationalistic myths and its nations.

The novel presents Amitav Ghosh’s concern with nationalism. Ghosh presents multiple points of view of the dispersed people of different nationalities and makes a plea for internationalism. He intends to show how

the context of imperialism has changed in globalization. Ghosh believes that empires imprison their rulers as well as their subjects. In his hands, the novel becomes a cultural instrument for hopes of social betterment.

The most singular word in the text of Indian imagination in English, Ghosh is always seeking out places, logo maniacally eager to write a new biography for the castaways of history.

On his pages, the polyphonic celebration of places, people and ideas never comes to an end, language never fails to meet the challenge of the story. *The Glass Palace* is a novel as an event. Two centuries, three generations, three countries the size of its life is timely balanced by the enormity of its ideas.

In this book of memory and movement the agony of the refugee illuminates the idea of exodus, the power of the empire enhances the powerlessness of its keepers, freedom neutralizes choice, and displacement is a permanent state of the dreamer. It's the human interest story of the great Indian diaspora, its loss and longing in the time of war and colonialism.

Ghosh says that writing this novel was like fighting a war. A war fought with great control. The agent of Ghosh's war discourse is a soldier called Arjun, a loyal officer in British Indian Army who is caught between loyalty and conscience.

In this novel, Ghosh intertwines the lives of his fictional characters with real people and events. He uses the lives of his protagonists to explore a range of issues, including colonialism, conflicting notions of loyalty and allegiance, and how these shape identities. Arjun, the British officer is Ghosh's instrument for investigating the motivations of those who resisted joining INA.

From *The Circle of Reason* (1986) till *River of Smoke* (2011), Ghosh has remained engaged in the exploration of all these varied issues. In all these novels, that are essentially family sagas set against historical backdrops and even in quite a few of his essays, Ghosh examines the role of the individual in the broad sweep of political events, the dubious nature of borders among nations and peoples, the role of memory in one's recovery of identity in the march of time and the importance of narrative in shaping history.

The Glass Palace, as Amitav Ghosh puts it, not only grasps the reach and fall of empires across the 20th Century, but also maps with unerring skills the rival geography of human heart. Through the intertwining stories of Dolly and Rajkumar, the history of the twentieth century is told across three generations; spread over three interlinked parts of the British Empire; Burma, with its conflicting undercurrents of discontent; Malaya, with its vast rubber plantations, and India, amid growing opposition to British rule. But what is the most striking part of the novel is the ever evident zest for life and struggle for existence which we find in it throughout right from the beginning till the end. Like other novels of Amitav Ghosh, *The Glass Palace* too has the capacity to transport us into its own world and make us get the feel of the fears and anxieties, pains and troubles of its characters but at the same time we cannot but marvel at the zest of life, at the kind of struggle which its characters make for ensuring their existence and wonder at the strength, the energy they endure throughout.

The feeling which naturally arise in us throughout are those of wonder and awe rather than pity and compassion. Such are the characters, their understanding, their vision that we are left with no option but to simply marvel at them. They are barely found to be unsure of themselves, rather are fully aware of their needs, aspirations, wants, and future course of action and

so on and so forth even in the toughest and trying times of struggle and chaos. Rajkumar though eleven years old boy was well-travelled. We find him walking into the unknown city, Mandalay, in search of job; he is not worried and shows no signs of fear or anxiety rather he is lost observing the beauty of Mandalay fort:

The citadel was a miracle to behold, with its mile long walls and its immense moat. The crenellated ramparts were almost three storeys high, but of a soaring lightness, red in colour, and topped by ornamented gateways with seven-tiered roofs... So intriguing was the ordered pattern of these streets that Rajkumar wandered far afield, exploring. It was almost dark by the time he remembered why he'd been sent to the city. (TGP5)

The characters in the novel are all struggling in their respective states of life but we find that they are not passive and fetch whatever little opportunities of enjoyment life provides them within those trying times of struggle and war. Saya John who is a contractor in teak camps, who has lost his wife comes to lonely Ma Cho in his free hours to share his burden of grief with her. But as Rajkumar's life was not meant to be easy with much struggle lying ahead and therefore we find troubles pouring in. The British wage a war against Thebaw, the king of Burma, in the name of teak wood defeating him with their advanced fleet, powerful cannons and guns.

The realities of life, ably manifested in the course of the novel by Ghosh, which change in minutes often baffle us and make us think about them twice in details. The story of Uma Dey, Dolly, Rajkumar and their children, niece, and nephews – and their children's children, takes us from the rubber boom of the industrial age to the front lines of Second World War, from India's struggle for independence to Burma's fall and its transformation into Myanmar under a military dictatorship. *The Glass Palace* is at once a gigantic history, a family saga and an adventure story. It

is so richly and compassionately rendered that at times we are baffled at its immensity and at others we come to feel we are a part of its vast extended family whose story finds its humble origins in two orphans Rajkumar and Dolly standing innocently on the threshold of the twentieth century who are uprooted from their roots not once but twice by the life but at both times they endure their share of struggles with endurance and survive heroically.

The treatment of women characters in Amitav Ghosh is too different from the traditional notions of female characters and their existence in fiction. They are not sleeping beauties but living creatures which rather than being a burden on their counterparts or anybody else are always ready with their struggle or their share of fight as and when needed. In the series we have Ma Cho, the lonely woman, struggling with her lot, who runs a food stall and offers job to many stray Indian boys like Rajkumar when in need of job from time to time. Then we meet the Queen Supayalat, the ruthless but courageous lady whom we find standing erect even in her defeat. Uma after suicide by her husband is not shattered rather finds her way to life by becoming active in politics and moving from place to place dealing with political affairs worldwide. Alison after death of her parents takes the responsibility of her grandfather and the estate of Morningside on herself and carries it on well. When the Japanese soldier catch hold of Alison's grandfather and one of them points a rifle towards him, without even thinking for a while Alison pulls out her revolver and fights back heroically.

She took aim carefully, and fired again. This time she hit the man with the bayonet. He screamed and dropped his rifle, falling face first on the ground. Her third shot went wide, ploughing up a divot of grass on the road side. The soldiers were flat on their stomachs now. Her targets were smaller now. But with her filth, she hit another soldier, sending him spinning on his side. (TGP 455)

Be it queen Supayalath or Dolly or Uma or Alison or Ma Thin Thin Aye or the Princesses we find that whenever the times are tough and test them they don't give up rather they remain ready with their share of struggle and fight back and stand by.

Novels of Amitav Ghosh are always a result of social, cultural and political research brought together in the novel passionately, philosophically and thoughtfully and *The Glass Palace* is no exception to it. And when he tells us about the amount of effort he had put in to build up the fabric of this novel and its story, we cannot but marvel at the time and effort which is behind the making of the vast panorama of the sea of life and its various never giving struggles for life and existences which is lying in front of us in the form of his novel:

Perhaps it was the very elusiveness of what I was trying to remember that engendered in me to near – obsessive urge to render the backgrounds of my characters' lives as closely as I could. In the five years it took me to write *The Glass Palace* I read hundreds of books, memoirs, travelogues, gazetteers, articles and notebooks, published and unpublished. I travelled thousands of miles, visiting and re-visiting, so far as possible, all the settings and locations that figure in this novel: I sought out scores of people in India Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand.(TGP 549)

In an interview with John.C.Hawley Ghosh states that he has been deeply influenced by the ideas of the Subaltern studies group. He also said:

It is true also that anyone who looks into Indian history must necessarily be amazed by how little is actually known about it. And I don't just mean the history of subaltern groups, but even of dissenting elites (for example the story of the founders of Indian National Army is unknown to most Indians) As for the history of the Indian presence in Burma, It is completely unknown – there is very little written about it. In this sense I felt I was bearing a double burden when I was writing *The Glass Palace*. When an American writes a historical novel he

or she can generally rely on the historians to have done the research. I didn't have this luxury available to me. I had to do much of the primary research while also telling a story. (Hawley 12)

To conclude we can say that *The Glass Palace* by Amitav Ghosh is one of those emphatic, successful, moving and influential novels which touches us deeply not only on account of the tremendous waste of blood and power, and money and life that it pictures but also inspires and moves us by the keen awareness of the stark realities of life of its characters, by the unyielding faith in struggle for existence by both its men and women. It encompasses in it not only the sufferings and fate of the rulers of Burma after their defeat but also depicts the chaos which falls upon the life of its subjects and other common people during the war period. It covers well enough the spirit of endurance and zest for life and tremendous struggles of the people of Asia during the most tough and trying times of the World Wars and their struggles for independence from the imperial rules during the baffling periods of modern history in its making.

CHAPTER 5

PLIGHT OF ABORGINES IN THE HUNGRY TIDE

Christopher Rollason in *In Our Translated World: Transcultural Communication in Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide*, argues that unlike his other novels, where there is a bewildering spread of geographical locale, *The Hungry Tide* focuses on a much smaller spread of land, namely the Sunderbans, or the Tide Country. *The Economist* reviewer took the view that it is its sense of place that dominates the novel and Ghosh himself vindicates such a view when he says: "A novel.... must always be set somewhere: it must have its setting, and within the evolution of the narrative this setting must, classically, play a part almost as important as those of the characters themselves" (Ghosh 160) The novel becomes a complex web of history, both personal and political, that ebbs and flows must like the 'jowar' and 'bhata' of Sunderbans. (THT 8). Brinda Bose argues that history is indeed a recurring theme in Ghosh's writing:

Ghosh's fiction takes upon itself the responsibility of re-assessing its troubled antecedents, using history as a tool by which we can begin to make sense of – or at least come to terms with – our troubling present. (Ghosh. T.K.160)

In every single one of his texts Amitav Ghosh demonstrates a concern with migrants, refugees and displaced persons. He has written on a wide range of themes such as fundamentalism, history, postcolonialism, culture and ecology. The Government of India has conferred upon him Padma Bhushan. Ghosh's imagination is as necessarily diasporic as it is postcolonial being a product of specific histories of the subcontinent in the twentieth century. He explores the identity of the so called world traveller in his fiction. *The Hungry Tide* is a master piece and fascinating book of

Amitav Ghosh. In this novel we find the terrifying beauty of river. Ghosh's writing reflects the genre of postcolonial literature.

Ghosh's novel sets, as its task, the exploration of a vast field of human communications, testing both its possibilities and its limits as the characters seek to cross multiple barriers – the barriers of language, religion and social class-between humans and nature, between traditional and cosmopolitan India, between the urban and the rural, between India and the wider world. The tension between the global and local is articulated through the characters; globalisation is embodied by the Americanised Piya with her hi-tech GPS device, while the local identity is symbolised by Fokir. Kanai, the Delhi-resident, part-globalised modern entrepreneur, is left shifting uncertainly somewhere in-between. Nishi Pulugurtha in “Refugees” Settlers and Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* argues that the novel privileges the subaltern over the cosmopolitan, but it might be that privileging of any one sect was not really Ghosh's primary concerns. He was probably more inclined to try and find a balance that would allow for the coexistence of seemingly heterogeneous elements.

The Hungry Tide depicts different aspects of postcolonialism: suffering of the Sunderbans refugees who come back to their home, local people like illiterate Fokir and Horen, educated Nirmal and Nilima with their post nationalist dreams, to control the disaster going in the lives of local people in *Lusibari Island*.

The Hungry Tide tells a very contemporary story of adventure and unlikely love, identity and history, set in one of the most fascinating regions on the earth. For settlers here life is extremely precarious. Attacks by deadly tigers are common. Unrest and eviction are constant threats. Without warning, at any time tidal floods rise and surge over the land, leaving devastation in their wake. In this place of vengeful beauty, the lives of three

people from different worlds collide. Piyali Roy is a young Calcutta born American Cetologist in search of a rare, endangered river Dolphins *orcaella brevirotris*. Her journey starts with a disaster, when she is thrown from a boat into crocodile – infested waters. Rescue comes in the form of a young illiterate fisherman, Fokir. Although they have no language between them Piya and Fokir are powerfully drawn to each other, sharing an extra ordinary instinct for the ways of the sea.

In *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh does not encompass vast swathes of South and South East Asia but he focuses a magnifying lens on what might be called a micro-culture within the region named Sunderbans which is situated on the islets of the Ganga delta that lie South of Kolkata and just east of the West Bengal or Bangladesh frontier. The novel highlights not only places but, crucially, dynamic evolving human relationships, cross cultural barriers and communication and the relationship between past and present. History recurs again and again in Ghosh's writing.

Piya is so drawn in by Sunderbans that she almost forfeits her life to her. Kanai Dutt, a Delhi businessman who fancies himself above being charmed, also nearly succumbs. Fokir may be unlearned in books and the world, but he is nearly her match in allure and primal power. But Fokir doesn't even try eluding the beautiful forest. She already owns his heart and soul and can call for him any time. Ghosh underscores this point by mixing characters native to tide country with outsiders who expect to come and go unscathed. Piya anticipates interacting with the landscape here no differently than she did with previous research sites in Cambodia and Vietnam. She has gadgets of her science and the flight schedule of someone for whom the entire globe belongs in her temporary, in passing purview. She is equally, however, a deracinated and incomplete person, and her improvised notion of place is about to be perilously enriched.

As a cosmopolitan writer, Ghosh travels and remaps the world drawing connections across the boundaries of the modern nation states. It is through the erasures and redrawing of cultural and political boundaries that separates and articulates that he weaves together a pluralistic and self-reflexive view of the world, which challenges the orthodoxy of the accepted narratives and the certainties of the postcolonial borders. Ghosh's novel deliberately sets the search for identity in a situation where words are mostly meagre, not at all effective modes of communication. Piya does not know Bangla, while her guide Fokir does not understand a word of English. At a literal level, Piya, the cetologist, needs Fokir to track the illusory Irrawady dolphin *Oracella brevirostris*, but at a deeper level, she probably needs him to find her own self. Since they cannot communicate through language, they seem to develop a far more primal and thereby probably more durable mode of communication:

He glanced from the card to her face and raised a hand to point upriver. She looked into his eyes and he nodded, as if to say, yes, that's where I saw them. She thrust the card at him again, expecting that he would point to the picture of the Gangetic dolphins, the more common of the two species. To her astonishment, his finger dropped to the illustration of the Irrawaddy dolphins, *oracella brevirostris*. He said something in Bengali and held up six fingers. (THT 47)

The Badabon Trust that Nilima Bose now runs, and the high school that her husband Nirmal had run until his death, were built over the site of a commune established by a British idealist named Sir Daniel Hamilton. The house is called *Lusibari* a pidgin version of Lucy's House, and was so named for Hamilton's wife who had sadly died on her way from England to join him. Hamilton was a utopian visionary, and he had brought ten thousand acres of the Sunderbans and invited impoverished people to come to populate the place, free to them on one condition – there would be no caste system, and no tribal nationalisms. Despite the crocodiles, tigers,

snakes and dangerous tides, despite the fact that they were farmers and would now have to become fishermen, many desperately poor people heeded his call and arrived. They moved to his commune in three waves – in the 1920s, in 1947 after partition, and in 1971 after the Bangladesh war – and they helped Hamilton establish a semi-communist region where the inhabitants shared possessions.

In 1950, eleven years after Hamilton's death, Nirmal and Nilima Bose had come to Lusibari. When the couple arrived, they saw utter destitution: much had fallen into decrepitude in the last eleven years. Nilima established the Women's Union and sought support from outside and by the 1980s, this had developed into the Badabon Trust.

Kanai learns that his friend from his visit as a child, Kusum had been abandoned by her mother, who had been tricked into working at a brothel and who had finally been literally worked to death there. She had eventually married Rajen, a poor man who had been made lame by a bus in Calcutta. The couple had a son and they named him Fokir, but just four years after the child's birth, Rajen falls in front of a train and dies. Almost as if to offer her son someone to take his father's place, Kusum tells Fokir the story of Bon Bibi, a good spirit who fights with the evil spirit Dokkin Raj for control of forests and waterways. Her father had built a little temple in Bon Bibi's honour on the island of Garjantola, and her son Fokir – and later he and his son Tutul – often visit there.

Nirmal had gone to Morichjhapi to warn Kusum, of the danger facing the Bangladeshi refugees who had recently fled to Morichjhapi from the resettlement camp in central India to which they had been sent. Morichjhapi was a tiger preserve, and the government considered the refugees to be squatters. Kusum's son Fokir is married to Moyna, a very determined young woman who has managed to give herself an education. When Kanai first

meets her, he immediately admires Moyana for her determination and ambition. She represents the human urge to cross the boundaries of one's class with the help of ambition and education. Piya, meanwhile, hires Fokir to take her out to observe the dolphins for several weeks.

Horen and Kanai accompany them, and go off on their own for a while. Before he and Horen can get very far, Kanai senses that a cyclone is approaching. They also learn that Piya and Fokir have gone out in Fokir's dangerously small boat. Fokir has steered to Garjantola – in what amounts to a tender instinct handed on him by his mother, and laden with the hope of Bon Bibi's intervention on behalf of the poor – and he and Piya climb the highest mangrove tree and tie themselves to the trunk. The storm is soon upon them, pausing only momentarily before hitting them repeatedly with full force, followed by a massive tidal wave. Eventually, it subsides. When all has become quiet, Piya sees that Fokir had died in shielding her from the lashing.

It had happened in the last hour of the storm, she said. He'd been hit by something very big and very heavy, an uprooted stump it had hit him so hard that she too had been crushed against the trunk of the tree they were sitting on. The sari had kept them attached to the trunk even as he was dying. His mouth was close enough to her ear so that she'd been able to hear him. He'd said Moyna's name and Tutul's before the breadth faded on his lips. (THT 392)

Kanai himself is a translator / interpreter by profession. He knows six languages and runs a translation and interpretation agency. He offers to act as interpreter for Piya who knows only English. For her research work, she has to communicate with the local Bengali speakers who know no other language except Bengali. Kanai interprets – mediates orally – between Piya and Fokir. He interprets for Piya for a portion of her expedition, but a certain point he concludes that she can communicate intuitively with her guide

Fokir. “I think you’ll be able to manage perfectly well without a translator” (THT 333). Kanai’s role as a translator / interpreter is also significant in the sense that his work straddles the divide between the written (translation) and the oral (interpretation). Kanai comes to terms with his past through a written text, his uncle’s journal.

Kanai represents the typical urban, Indian male who has lost touch with simplicity, innocence and freshness of life that is embodied in Fokir and Moyna, his wife. Kanai develops an admiration for Moyna in whom he sees reflection of his own desires. She lives a hard life and bears pain for her son, Tutul and husband Fokir. She evokes fascination in Kanai, “it was as if her very existence were a validation of the choices he had made in his own life. It was important for him to believe that his values were, at bottom, egalitarian, liberal, meritocratic” (THT 219)

If much of Ghosh’s writing career has demonstrated a fascination with the passage of history, and its continuities over time, this novel seems more to underscore the fragility of our brief time on earth. This emphasis on the tenuous nature of human existence offers a powerful context for the book’s concentrated focus on characters like Fokir who come into life and pass away without rippling the waves of official history. As far as the records are concerned, they are simply among the legions of unimportant individuals like Alu in *The Circle of Reason*, Laakhan in *The Calcutta Chromosome*, grandmother’s poor relations in *The Shadow Lines*, or Kishen Sing in *The Glass Palace*. They are voiceless nobodies. Since Fokir first appears on the scene as something of a knight in shining armour saving Piya from the two ‘guides’ the reader valorises this subaltern character as an honest, possibly complex figure.

Fokir was the truest soul in the novel. He was an illiterate man, but possesses more knowledge of the river and its wildlife than all the outsiders

who don't understand him. Piya feels an affinity for Fokir and his life which matches the rhythms of his environment. Kanai, attracted to Piya and envious of Fokir, decides to accompany them on a trip up the river to study the dolphins. The three of them embark on a trip into the heart of the tide country which will bring lasting change to all of their lives. Piya has come back to life from the world of death. Kanai hand over Piya a complete translation of BonBibi legend to make her understand the full depth of Fokir's spirituality.

Ghosh's ability to evoke a sense of time and place is evident; his depiction of the tide country as the Sundarban archipelago is often referred to, is excellent. The reader is shown a timeless place where history, myth and the present merge into one, in which Man and nature are locked in constant competition, vying for domination of the land. In stark contrast to this almost primitive struggle for survival, however the author brings out the richness and diversity of these Islands' culture in great detail. The Sunderbans transcend geographical boundaries, lying as they do on the Indo-Bangladeshi border, and their culture reflects this, drawing on Hindus, Muslims and Christian traditions as much as local folklore.

Amitav Ghosh, one of the foremost Indian English writers writes his works in tune with the global change, multicultural environs and cosmopolitanism. His novel *The Hungry Tide* tells the sad tale of the agonies of the low class refugees and the harsh realities of the life of the Sunderbans Islanders.

Ghosh portrays hunger in the literal sense of the word as he shows how the poor islanders fight with the calamitous environment to get their daily single meal. The soil bore poor crops, the floods and storms rendered the land infertile. Most of the families subsided on a single day meal. "The destitution of the tide country was such as to remind them of the terrible

famine that had devastated Bengal in 1942 – except that in Lusibari hunger and catastrophe were a way of life”. (THT 79)

The settlers of Lusibari were drawn to Lusibari in the beginning of twentieth century by the promise of free farmland by a Scottish visionary Sir Daniel Hamilton. The settlers were mainly farmers but

Hunger drove them to hunting and fishing and the results were often disastrous. Many died of drowning, and many more were picked off by crocodiles and estuarine sharks. No day seemed to pass without news of someone being killed by tiger, a snake or a crocodile. (THT 79)

Just like the animal’s hunger, nature’s hunger is mentioned in the novel at various places. The treatment of nature in the novel is quite unlike Wordsworth’s adoration of the same. Sometimes nature may be as disastrous and heinous as a violent beast that is hungry to devour human lives. The inhabitants of the Sunderbans often encounter the life threatening dangers, posed by nature in the form of storms and cyclones. Ghosh’s depiction of nature does not contain any false sentimentalism. The novel’s title *The Hungry Tide* stands for all the disastrous aspects of the nature. The major issue significantly touched by Ghosh in the novel is the man – woman relationship. Almost all the major characters of the novel are engulfed by their hunger or passion to establish a relationship with one another. Beyond the stereotyped spoken romance, Ghosh displays the bond between Piya and Fokir that does not require speech or language. The love triangle of Kanai – Piya – Fokir is similar to that of Nirmal – Kusum – Horen. Just like Kanai who with all his learning could not enter the heart of Piya, Nirmal could not enter Kusum’s heart. Kusum chose the illiterate Horen over the educated Nirmal. The emotional entanglements between the characters show that the hunger of love is present in every human heart.

The storm resulted with the death of Fokir who have saved Piya's life. As the novel's title *The Hungry Tide* indicates, the tide's hunger had eaten up the potentially rich love of Piya and Fokir. Ghosh's portrayal of hunger and starvation of the poor people of the tide country, his description of nature's hunger in the form of tiger and storm and his metaphorical use of hunger in terms of love constitute the hunger motif, a predominant feature of *The Hungry Tide*.

From the Himalayan Mountains arises the holy river of India the Ganges ending up its course in the Bay of Bengal. Indian myth says that when the river Ganges first descended from the heavens, the force of the cascade was so great that the earth would have been destroyed if it has not been for the Lord Shiva who tamed the torrent by catching it in his deadlocks. It is only when the Ganges approaches the Bay of Bengal that it frees itself and separates into thousands of wandering strands. The result is the Sunderbans, an immense stretch of mangrove forest a half-drowned land, where the waters of Himalaya merge with the incoming tides of the sea. The Ganges creates a vast archipelago of islands called the Sunderbans.

to the world at large this archipelago is known as 'the Sunderban', which means, 'the beautiful forest': There are some who believe the word to be derived from the name of a common species of mangroves –the Sundari tree, *Heriteria minor*, for the record books of the Mughal emperors this region is named not in reference to a tree but to a tide – *bhati*. And to the inhabitants of the islands this land is known as *bhatir desh* – the tide country. (THT 8)

They are made up of islands, Sandbars and mangrove forests, rivers creeks and channels. From those islands *Lusibari* is one of them. It is the habitat of various animals, the Bengal tiger, huge crocodiles, sharks, snakes and a few people as well. The life of the people in the Sunderbans is isolated and deaths from crocodile and tigers are common. Government has led the rules

on the preservation of wild life. It happens sometime by exclusion of the people who live there. The Government is not concerned about the life of people who are dead by tiger or even by cyclone. The lives of the tigers valued more than the lives of the people.

The Hungry Tide is about the settlement of human being in forested land. We found that Sunderbans is a place where beauty is harsh and vengeful, this make human existence an intense task and full of struggle. In this novel we find the terrifying beauty of river and forest.

Beauty is nothing
 But the start of terror we can hardly bear
 And we adore it because of the serene scorn
 It could kill us with.... (THT 69)

The plight of the refugees, who were forcibly resettled by the Indian government of Madhya Pradesh, hundreds of kilometres from Bengal in Dandakaranya was due to hunger and poverty, they are subjected to do fishing to survive and this bring disastrous situation on island. They were pressurized to leave the island, where they had made their own country. Because of the humiliation and exploitation thrust on them by the high caste society of Hindus and Muslims.

The novel highlights the place and human relationships. Nirmal and Piya both are fond of nature lover, but for Nirmal lives of human being is more important than predators. And for Piya, animal life is also important. From ecological point of view the life of both human beings and animals are equally important to maintain the balance of ecosystem. If any one species of them would disappear from the land then the ecological imbalance will occur and the ecosystem comes to danger.

For the inhabitants of the tide country, they are themselves part of the environment; their lives are dictated by the rhythms and force of the tides, by their relation to the soil and to the animals that surround them. The novel suggests that western environmentalism has, at least in some incarnations, a propensity to separate humanity from ‘nature’ – perhaps, as a result of the binary western thinking that posits and opposition between ‘culture’ and ‘nature’ – and the tiger in particular is seen as a motif of this clash of perspectives. Whilst the tide country people fear and respect the tiger, they see it as just another inhabitant of the Sunderbans. They do not, however, romanticise the tiger nor do they believe that the tiger needs to be protected from them. Indeed, they know that nothing protects them from the tiger. The tigers in the tide country are man-eaters and they live beside humans in a precarious balance that is signalled symbolically by the imaginary line that divides Bon-bibi’s realm (human) from the demon Dokkin – Raj’s (the tiger). For either creature to cross that line is to invite confrontation.

When Piyaali Roy witnesses the killing of a tiger, her sympathy for the tiger outweighs her concern for the human inhabitants of the village. It is the moment that her romantic vision of her fisherman guide, Fokir, is punctured. Like Mayin *The Shadow Lines*, her tone is one of outrage and moral censure. Again, the politics that accompanies this position is an activist one. “We have to do something Kanai. We can’t let this happen” (THT 293). Her companion, Kanai, an urban and modern Indian, recognises what she herself cannot or does not see. Instead of action, he suggests that she try to see it from the villagers’ point of view. “Piya, you have to understand – that animal’s been preying on this village for years. It’s killed two people and any number of cows and goats” – (THT 294). Locked as she is into a Western paradigm which sees humans as beings different from animals, she believes that human beings must be responsible for their action, whereas animals bear no responsibility for theirs. “This is an animal, Kanai,

Piya said you can't take revenge on an animal" (THT 294) This is in contrast to Fokir, who sees the tiger much as he would see his human neighbours, "He says, when a tiger comes into human settlements, it's because it wants to die" (THT 295)

Ghosh represents this episode in a manner that closes the customary distance between humanity and animals. For Western readers this perhaps displaces sympathy onto the animal; on the other hand we are told both during the episode and in the chapter that follows the tigers kill people as well. In an ethical debate between Kanai and Piya, he reminds her that "It happens every week that people are killed by tigers. If there were killings on that scale anywhere else on earth it would be called a genocide, and yet here it goes almost unremarked. These killing are never reported never writes about in the papers". (THT 300)

The reason for this, he argues was "because it was people like you" said Kanai, who made a push to protect the wild life here, without regard for the human costs. (THT 301) Piya, however retorts,

Just, suppose we crossed the imaginary line that prevents us from deciding that no other species matters except ourselves. Once we decide we can kill off other species, it'll be people next – exactly the kind of people you're thinking of, people who're poor and unnoticed (THT 301)

Partition is a recurring theme in Indian English Writing. Much of the literature focuses on the experience of partition on the Punjab border. Amitav Ghosh stands out in his choice to write about the aftermath of partition on the Bengal border, and his novel demonstrate a continuing engagement with the motif of migration and refugee settlement in West Bengal.

The history of the Indian novel in English reflects the fact that partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 has been the single most important determining factor of India's destiny. From Kushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* in 1956 to Shauna Singh Baldwin's *what the Body Remembers* in 1999; it seems a new perspective on the event emerges in each succeeding decade.

Marked by the twin features of massacre and migration, Partition, however did not mean the same thing for Punjab and Bengal. The Punjab partition was a one-time event that was marked by a two way exodus, while the partition of Bengal turned out to be a continuing process, with migration happening predominantly in one direction – ie., from East to West Bengal. Ghosh highlights precisely this aspect in his second novel, *The Shadow Lines* (1988). He provides vivid glimpses of what life was like for refugees on both sides of the border, even at the end of the Nehruvian era. The Bengali Muslim refugees who sought shelter in Bangladesh seemed to have fared much better than the refugees in West Bengal, who were damned to a life of destitution and starvation in the nation they had escaped into. In *The Hungry Tide* (2004), Amitav Ghosh chronicles the saga of just such a group of refugees who were sent by the West Bengal Government to Dandakarnya in Madhya Pradesh in 1961, but who left the place and returned to West Bengal in 1978, only to be massacred and evicted again.

Homeland or rather the quest for one is the focal area of many Amitav Ghosh's novel. But nowhere is this quest so strongly etched as it is done in *The Hungry Tide*. The novel is awash with a hunger, a human carving for home, an urge to figure out one's own place in the great scheme of things. This urge had led men to try to build up their homes in perhaps one of the most uninhabitable places in the world, the Sunderbans. People, uprooted by political upheavals, as well as those forced to disperse due to

personal turbulences, have tried to inhabit and build a home in the Sunderbans. These people inhabit the fictional universe of *The Hungry Tide*.

Homeland or Nation is of purely imaginary origin. Benedict Anderson's famous definition will always be pertinent in any discussion related to the concept of Nationhood: "it is an imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Biswas 119). "It is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship". The Western concept of nationhood also depends upon an imposition of the principle of homogeneity. Gellner in his famous book *Nation and Nationalism* comments upon "The kind of cultural homogeneity demanded by nationalism". (Biswas 119)

But 'limit', 'sovereignty', 'homogeneity' are entirely foreign concepts in this tide country. The tide country is a unique place where it is difficult even to distinguish fresh water and saline water. In such a scenario the very thought of establishing sovereign rights over the inhabited islands is nothing but a chimera. But still people have tried not only to inhabit but also to make Sunderbans their own home. Sunderbans is also the home of wild animals, most of them ferocious. It is the land of tides, a place where none but Nature has its complete sway. Yet people from diverse social strata inhabit this dreaded space. Nature here erases whole era of human attempts to colonize the wilderness. "the speciality of mangroves is that they do not merely recolonize land; they erase time. Every generation creates its own population of ghosts". (THT 50)

Ghosh is also suggestive of the political cyclones which, in the name of protecting tigers and other wild-lives, would not hesitate to destroy the settlements built by the poor and weak people. For instances, the Morichjhapi massacre incident of 1978-79, when the newly elected CPI(M)

government of West Bengal forcibly evicted thousands of Bengali refugees who had settled on the island.

In 1978 it happened that a great number of people suddenly appeared in Morichjhapi..... It happened so quickly that in the beginning no one even knew who these people were. But in time it came to be learnt that they were refugees, originally from Bangladesh. (THT 118)

These refugees, who had moved from East Pakistan to West Bengal, from West Bengal to Madhya Pradesh and then again from Madhya Pradesh to the Sunderbans in search of a space where they can ‘reterritorialize’, had settled down in one of these islands as they had no where to go and built a beautiful territory there filled with civilizational requirements. These refugees selected Morichjhampi island of Sunderbans finding vast tract of free land and thinking they would be free from the Governmental as well as local interference.

Salt pans had been created, tube wells had been planted, water had been dammed for the rearing of fish, a bakery had started up, boat-builders had set up workshops, a pottery had been founded as well as an ironsmith’s shop; All this in the space of a few months: it was an astonishing spectacle – as though an entire civilization had sprouted suddenly in the mud. (THT 190-91)

At the time of partition government made settlement of those refugees to a place called Dandakaranya. According to Government it is called resettlement but it was a kind of prison or a concentration camp for those people. “They were surrounded by security forces and forbidden to leave. Those who tried to get away were hunted down” (THT 118). They undergo and suffer exploitation by the local people. Then in 1978 most of them organised and broke the camp away and moved towards the eastwards in search of habitant place in Sunderbans. Finally they found the place called Morchjhapi. It is the place reserved for tiger conservation. These refugees

want only little land to survive. And for that they can even pit against the government and resist until the end. This was the reason Nirmal becomes revolutionary for the sake of these refugees. He was the man with the idea of revolution. For that he takes part in the movement of revolution.

One of the main character in the novel is Kusum, Fokir's mother. Her father was dead when he went for firewood in the place of off limits. He was attacked by the animal across the river. Nirmal went with Kusum to meet the leader of the ward of island. He was amazed by the care taken by the people of land to make the new country in creating organisations, institutions and the settlement of their own government. Leader of that island says that they have also taken help from the neighbouring islands to build the Morichjhapi. At the end of their meeting leader of ward puts his desire in front of Nirmal to help them for not being thrown out from that island. To bring pressure on the government to leave, that land for them. As the Government has created notions in public mind that we are gangsters and destroying this place and environment. They wanted to make clear that they are not gangster, but a brother of same language and customs. Island may become Dalith nation, but what would happen in future no one knows. Within a few days Kusum comes to Lusibari in seek of help with Mashima for the people of Morichjhapi. But Nilima (Mashima) says that if everybody starts settling down in the same way, soon the day will come when whole forest will disappear. According to her if the refugees will do in the same way this will bring environment disorder. She loves to protect environment.

Soon the day comes when the government made announcement to leave the island, that all the movement in and out of Morchjampi was banned under the provision of forest prevention act, under section 144. And the war had broken out in the quiet recesses of the tide country. Police forced the people of island to go back the place from where they come but

they denied leaving the place of their dream. Police had destroyed the tube wells and there was no potable water to drink, nothing to eat, settlers use to eat grass and drink water from puddles and ponds; and cholera had broken out. In 1978, several hundred Bengali refugees in Morichjhampi, one of the northern most forested islands of Sunderbans were brutally evicted by the authorities for violating the forest acts.

All citizens of India, irrespective of position, status, religion, caste or creed are subservient to the Constitution of India. In the democratic system of India, the Constitution of India is supreme. Each Indian has to recognize the supremacy of the constitution. The Indian Constitution has laid down specific provisions to protect citizens from abridgements of human rights and rule of law. Notwithstanding the protection provided by the Constitution of India, reports of violation of fundamental rights and basic human rights are regularly reported in the media. Those who have been given the responsibility of protection of human rights are often found to be the violators. Custodial violence strikes at the roots of the rule of law. (Sharma 63)

One of the settlers was able to get through the police cordon. He went to Calcutta and talked at length to the news papers and finally high court ruled that barricading the settlers was illegal; but still police cordon forced them to abandon their homes. Kusum's condition becomes terrible. Kusum says,

the worst part was not hunger or the thirst. It was to sit here, helpless and listen to the policemen making their announcements, hearing them say that our lives, our existence, was worth less than dirt or dust...Who are these people. I wondered, who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them? ... As I thought of these things it seemed to me that this whole world has become a place of animals, and our fault, our crime was that we were just human beings. (THT 261, 162)

At the end of the novel, we see that Kusum was killed by the police cordons, thousands of people were killed in war. Kusum has a strong determination power, she faced the brutality of authorities evicted on her. She refused to leave that land in sake to save her life. But she bravely revolted against the war thrust on the people of Morichjhampi. Moreover the people of Morichjhampi was forced to leave the land by keeping them starved and the woman of island were wronged by police cordon and then they threw them after killing, man was forced to leave the island. Amitav Ghosh lets the tide country break down the barriers of both society and his characters. While *The Hungry Tide* is about the struggle for each person to find their place in the world, it is not a novel of constant action and suspense.

Morichjhampi, incident is a part of public history. Amitav Ghosh is more interested in private histories of the individuals who were victimized in the historical incidents. Here Ghosh uses public history as a background for his reconstruction of private history. According to the subaltern theory, the migrants, who struggled in Morichjhampi fall under subaltern category. Here Ghosh reconstructs the private histories of these subalterns through the examples of Kusum and thereby tries to voice their plight and sufferings.

Ghosh's major concern in this novel is to universalise subaltern history. These subaltern figures therefore are made the real heroes who by their sheer power of resistance to unbearable odds and adversities rise to the status of the real makers of history. As Kanai reads Nirmal's journal, he gets an insight into the past. In the journal, Nirmal takes Kanai on a journey to the 70's – a period that witnessed serious political crisis, with the partition of Bengal. The communal riots forced many to leave Bengal. These settlers are forced to suffer exile due to the powerful historical forces. They are underprivileged and marginalised, and are usually at the receiving end of all the violence, injustice and humiliation, inflicted by the government. It is a

part of the daily struggle of each and every inhabitant of the islands. The misery, suffering and exploitation has been their history, their destiny and since ages they had wandered from place to place in search of shelter. Their past, vibrant and alive in the form of religious myths, ideas of good and evil, lends the inhabitants, exceptional strength to face life's miseries and difficulties, with a vitality and forthrightness that people like Kanai, Piya or Nirmal find lacking in themselves. Stuart Hall speaks;

The Past continues to speak to us. But it no longer addresses us as a simple, factual past since our relation to it, like the child's relation to the mother, is always already 'after the break'. It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. (Stuart Hall – Post colonial Theory A Reader) (qtd. in Sharma 109)

Ghosh portrays the conflict and the prohibition that the refugees undergo in their search of a safe haven, a homeland. The Morichjhapi episode is not a singular instance. Thousands of events of massacre of the displaced and dispossessed people are going on through out the world. The episode is one of the spine chilling descriptions of State sponsored terror. In order to 'govern' the State can even repress and reform the records of the actual events. There are very little records of these events as history does not belong to the subalterns. Consequently most of them remain unrecorded. Even this Morichjhapi massacre has been almost erased from public memory. Ghosh himself comments about the paucity of documents related to this event in his Author's Note given at the end of the novel:

Around the time of its occurrence the Morichjhapi incident was widely discussed in the Calcutta press, English as well as Bengali. Today the only historical treatment available in English is an article by Ross Mallick *Refugee Resettlement in Forest Reserves: West Bengal Policy Reversal and the Morichjhapi Massacre* (The Journal of Asian studies, 1999, 58:1 PP. 103-125) (THT 402)

Amitav Ghosh's novels are marked with journeys, visits, and human movements across time and space. They also capture the problematic of the issues such as nationality and gender. *The Hungry Tide* is one such novel which emphasizes not only crossing the land but also crossing of water bodies at different places. He marks the Sunderbans, the train journey and Oceanography as metaphors of migration as they indicate the spirit of human exploration into the world of new experience.

Characters also use thoughts to effect mental migration in the novel. Piya, for instance, though travels physically across Bengal goes back to America mentally. Memories and sensations bring the continents together in her thoughts;

She had never cared for the kind of *Chai* on offer in Seattle, her hometown, but somehow, in the ten days she had spent in India she had developed an unexpected affinity for milky, overboiled tea served in earthenware cups. There were no spices in it for one thing, and this was more to her taste than the *Chai* at home (THT 9)

Kanai's profession as a translator is also a kind of journey. He moves through languages and communities.

Like his other novels, Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* is also concerned with many issues of migration such as the geographical enigma, travel, exploration, encounter and memory. This book marks Ghosh's movement across the boundaries of genres and disciplines. It weaves together fiction, autobiography and history. In his interview with U.N. Chronicle, Amitav Ghosh explains the interdisciplinary project that he has handled in the novel:

My previous novel, *The Glass Palace* was very much about my father's history. *The Hungry Tide* is again closely related to my family. This is my first book that is completely located and situated in Bengal and it was very important to me for exactly that reason. It was also very exciting to explore the

deep layering of Bengal. I feel in some mental an emotional way I'm in a process of returning, which will take me a long, long time, and it is currently underway. Typically, it takes me between three and four years, but sometimes more, to conceive the idea of a novel and actually execute it. *The Glass Palace* took me five years: *The Hungry Tide* took four. I spent a long time, in the Sunderbans – living in a village, meeting people, learning how to catch crabs. (qtd. in. Jha49,50)

Ghosh's words not only explain how the personal experiences overlap with historical details but also imply how *The Hungry Tide* is a blend of fiction, autobiography and history.

In *The Hungry Tide*, the modes of migration are thus more subtle. Piyali Roy moves between America and India whereas Sunderbans holds a history of human migration from the colonial days to the present. The people of Sunderbans have reached the archipelago in search of labour and better social life. Kanai uses translation as a mode of travel. He crosses over cultures and languages in his translation assignments. *The Hungry Tide* also, captures a vision of cross-cultural understanding. Fokir who represents the native culture and Piyali who represents Western nationalism meet at the magical and myth-ridden Sunderbans. Their meeting and their subsequent journey together in search of dolphins mark a movement across linguistic barriers and cultural walls.

Thus the novel ends on a happy note though the spirit of Fokir continues to haunt the survivals. Piya's decision to work for the dolphins is a pronouncement of her new eco-spiritualism which she has learnt from Fokir and local fishermen. She crosses the corporeal boundary of human shape to connect to the spirits of other lives such as that of dolphins and trees. This novel also marks a constant re-figuration of the landmass. This geographical reshaping by the tidal water implies border crossing and its symbolic significance.

The tide comes in twice daily, resulting in a constant reshaping of the land and uprooting of anything permanent. Such a setting makes an apt symbol for the ebb and flow of history and the uprooting of populations, both of which have come to be seen as ‘Ghosh-ian’ themes. Furthermore, just as the natural tides of the area tend to obliterate the sense of permanent division between land and sea, Ghosh’s characters gradually learn to recognize the transient nature of the divisions between individuals – of whatever social class. (Hawley 132)

The reader never feels that he is reading a textbook, but realizes, nevertheless, that he is being continuously enlightened on one issue or another. After going through the book one can claim to have come to know the ‘tide country’ reasonably well.

Ghosh is rooted in Indian culture, and is essentially, an Indian writer, with an international readership. The kind of writer Amitav Ghosh is, has been clearly brought out by A.K. Ramanujan, thus Ghosh, to say, “evokes things Indians with an inwardness that is lit and darkened by an intimacy with Elsewhere”. In the context of *The Hungry Tide* Amitav Ghosh seems to have brought a fresh perspective on the East – West theme. In this book, it seems to have been played out, unwittingly, against the backdrop of an awesome environment of the Sunderbans. East and west theme are not involved in a ‘conflict’ or synthesis at all, neither they are presented as contrast, but come together and even look beyond.

Nilanjana Chatterjee’s excellent dissertation, *Midnight’s Unwanted children: East Bengali Refugee and the Politics of Rehabilitation* (Brown University) has unfortunately never been published. Annu Jalais’s article, *Dwelling on Morichjhampi*, is also yet to be published. (THT 402)

The Morichampi episode shows how bloody can the politics of resettlement get. It portrays the clash between state interest and private yearning for home. When such clash takes place the state and its representatives can even

use ecological concern as their weapon against the Homeless. But very few records of such conflicts remain.

Nirmal pertinently quotes Rilkes: “Each slow turn of the world carries such disinherited ones to whom neither the past nor the future belongs” (THT 165)

In *The Hungry Tide*, the love that Piya and Moyna shares for Fokir, allows both of them to forge a new beginning. The trust fund that Piya musters for Tutul’s education and Moyna’s training allows for a moment of connection however tenuous. It is difficult to conclude with any definitive form, what pattern the interaction between the traditional and the modern might take. At the end of the novel, both Piya and Kanai return ‘home’: Piya settles at Lusibari while the retaining of Kanai’s right to inhabit the Guest House seems to indicate that such a return is now a distinct possibility. The desire for the home is after all a search for an illusive identity, common in much of diasporic literature.

Through the lives of ordinary people like Kusum, Fokir and Moyna and the other islanders, Ghosh highlights the interrelation between the personal and the universal. Their personal life portrays the real picture of humanity. Their lives depict an entire history of the odds and adversities that ordinary individuals have to bear in their struggle for survival. The real history of survival, the pain and misery of suffering masses is overlooked by mainstream history. By focusing the lives of these individuals, Ghosh highlights that missing dimension of history that it needed to present a complete and true picture of humanity and simultaneously of history. *The Hungry Tide* is a masterfully conceived and admirable book. By writing this book Ghosh has proved himself to be a successful craftsman who has brilliantly foregrounded the multi-layered and multi-cultural intricacies of the islanders – the inmates of Sunderbans.

CHAPTER 6

SUBALTERN CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE SEA OF POPPIES

Amitav Ghosh considered to be one of the literary giants in the field of Indian Writing in English has carved a niche for himself in the field of fiction. He is not only a great scholar but also a person who strives hard to contribute something substantial to Indian fiction. In fact Amitav Ghosh occupies the top slot among the current writers who have brought name and fame to Indian Writing in English. His writings reveal his in-depth knowledge about colonialism, multiculturalism and different countries, which serve as an eye-opener to all the academicians, who wish to explore different areas in their quest for excellence. Ghosh has over two decades, brought substance and range to Indian English fiction and indeed, added richly to the literature of the sub continent as a whole.

Distinguished scholars named Ruchira Paul and Narayan Acharya remarks,

Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*, the first part of a projected trilogy may be his most straight forward narrative to date. A historian/anthropologist by training, Ghosh has a proclivity of whipping around between distant times and places while weaving his tales. (Sharma 123).

Sea of Poppies (2009) is the first volume of Amitav Ghosh's projected trilogy which once again confirms his status as a master story teller. The novel primarily deals with opium war, a crucial event in the world history and is set in an era of agricultural Scandal when Western demand for profitable but inedible crops like poppy caused starvation in the subaltern world. Moreover the novel highlights multiple concerns that the author used to project directly or indirectly in his previous work of fiction. A

few amongst these are incessant movements of people from one place to another, crossing the geographical and political boundaries, trade, commerce lives of men and women with little power, question of past, culture, identity, gender and caste.

Ghosh's training in historical and anthropological research, his eschewing of ground theoreticist gestures and his links with the *subaltern studies* project, make his work an interesting site around which current arguments in post colonial theory can be conducted. (Khair 10)

Ghosh takes care to avoid familiar figure from history and looks a margins of society that can give him a better point of fictionalizing and to his own end. Using famous people would limit his trajectory and would force him to conform to factual boundaries – something that Sunil Gangopadhyay does with much finesse in his *Prothom Alo* (First light) (Volume 1: 1996, Volume 2. 1997). Using this kind of semi-historical narrative has its theoretical conflicts as well. As a matter of fact, history is generally read from the theoretical, standpoints of the post colonialism or nationalism, mainly the actions of great men. In this novel, we look at a period of time in which the notion of nation itself is somewhat absent. This is a period which elitist historiography, to borrow a phrase from Ranjit Guha (*Subaltern Studies* 1,2) does not address in its entirety. The area that Amitav Ghosh concentrates on is beyond even the generalized subaltern that Ranjit Guha Speaks of. These are figures that are not a part of any theoretically constructed collective, but are a part of a group that is forced to migrate, a group that is excluded by all structures and from all contexts. However, this is a group equally influenced by colonialism; it is only their response that creates the need for exclusion from later general narratives.

In his article, *The Transit Lounge of Culture*, the American anthropologist James Clifford has attempted to frame Ghosh's work in the

context of recent developments in the discipline of anthropology. Texts like Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands / La Frontera* have shifted anthropology away from the study of separate, authentic cultures toward the borderlands between cultures; away from separate to comparative inter cultural studies. Such diaspora cultures are not oriented towards lost origins or homelands, but are produced by ongoing histories of migrations and transnational cultural flows. Once we begin to focus on these inter-cultural processes, Clifford argues, the notion of separate, discrete cultures evaporates; we become aware that all cultures have long histories of border crossings, diasporas and migrations.

His novel exhaustively examines expedition, encounters, exploitation and escapes of criminals / indentured labourers / underclass off the coast of Canton, Hong Kong and Indian migrants travelling through ships to seek indentured labour for plantations in Mauritius and in British West Indies.

Influenced by his association with the subaltern studies, Ghosh with his rigorous mode of empirical research recovered the characters of the masters, possessing hegemonic power and of their slaves, sighing and crying under the burden of oppression, be it for their caste hierarchy or for the British power or for their gender status. *Sea of Poppies*, has a number of characters, who groan under the British rule but Kalua is a man who is doubly marginalized. He was an untouchable and Chamar by caste and that is why he had to bear the burden of being lowest in the caste hierarchy and simultaneously became the Victim of British Colonial rule.

Ghosh destabilizes, deterritorializes, mobilizes, transports and exports marginality and the grand narratives of history over the narrative frame of a sprawling historical novel in *Sea of Poppies* by conjuring up a former slave ship called the Ibis and by packing it with multitude of characters such as a Raja in debt, a Chinese criminal, girmitiyas (indentured coolies) Malay

crewmen and stowaways. The ship that sails off to Mauritius is packed with marginal figures like Zachary Reid, a mixed race seahead from Baltimore, a group of indentured Indian farmers including Deeti who is in attempt to escape a parochial society, and her lower caste paramour, Kalua. Most of these figures are relegated to the margins of social spaces and they have no other option but to migrate. This ship, with these assorted people, becomes a metaphor of floating margins. Besides, the Ibis was used in the past as a slave ship. It connects, thus the margins created by Imperialism to the margins created by racism.

Amitav Ghosh's novel *Sea Of Poppies* is set in an era of agricultural scandal: burgeoning Western demand for profitable but inedible crop is causing starvation and catastrophe in the subaltern world. Thrown in some imperialist cries of war in the name of freedom and things start to sound depressingly familiar – but the year is 1837 and opium, rather than biofuels or animal feed, is the culprit. The Chinese are hooked, the Indians have been coerced into cultivating the stuff, and Britain is the prosperous dealer. Recent Chinese attempt to curb the trades means that “gunboat diplomacy” is on the horizon.

This terrific novel unfolds in north India and the Bay of Bengal in 1838 on the eve of the British hit on the Chinese ports known as the foremost opium war. Ghosh begins in the villages of eastern Bihar with a panorama of characters like Deeti, her opium addicted husband, who works at the British opium factory at Gazhipur, and Kalua, a low-caste carter of immense vigor and resource. Moving downstream, we meet a bankrupt landowner, Raja Neel Rattan; an American sailor, Zachary Reid; Paulette, a young French woman and her Bengali foster – brother Jodu; Benjamin Burham, an unscrupulous British merchant, and his Bengali agent, Baboo

Nob Kissin and an array of different minor as well as major characters, who contribute to the color and texture of this great work.

This novel is a complete package of surprises, love, hate, revenge, sex, egotism, friendship, kinship and many more, which are explored by the reader as the pages are turned. *Sea Of Poppies* opens in a remote village devastated by these circumstances. Amitav Ghosh commences the narrative with Deeti, a straight forward religious lady, a typical house wife and a mother who is married to Hukum Singh, a crippled worker in the Ghazipur Opium Factory. The inopportune Deeti figures out that, she was drugged with opium by her husband, so that her brother-in-law could consummate the marriage in place of her infertile husband. This evil design was devised by her mother-in-law who had every intension of assuring that whatever had happened on her wedding night would be repeated so that she can bear more children.

Throughout her life Deeti and her parents felt that Saturn (Shani) ruled her life. “it was as if the shade of Saturn, had passed over her face, to remind her of her destiny” (SOP 34). Her husband is not fit-enough to work in the fields as he works in an Opium factory in Ghazipur. One day Deeti gets the news of her husband being unwell and is asked to fetch him back, with Kalua’s help, she gets to the factory. Over here Deeti rushes in terror through every particular shed of the factory in looking for her dying husband. Poppy flowers, sap and trash are processed before Deeti’s shocked rustic eyes. Ghosh has beautifully sketched the agricultural calendar, the beauty of poppy flowers, seeds, and the sap feels so real as if the reader is holding them in his / her hands.

Even after seven years Chandan Singh her brother-in-law keeps on coming in hope that one day Deeti would give into carnal pleasures, or the hardships of cultivating poppy would break her and would make her ready to

make a son with her brother-in-law as it's feasible to conceive while her husband is alive. Chandan Singh tells Deeti that:

if you conceive a son while he is still living, he will be his father's rightful heir. Hukum Singh's land will pass to him and no one will have the right to dispute it. My brother's land and his house will become mine on his death. Jekhar khet, tekardhan – he who owns the land, owns the rice. When I became master of this house, how will you get by except at my pleasure? (SOP 157)

when her husband dies, Deeti sends her daughter Kabutri to stay with her relatives. Deeti looks almost certain to meet her doom when she is forced to consider Sati ritual as the only option in the face of threats of more rapes by her brother-in-law but then Kalua, the ox man from the neighbouring village, comes to her rescue from the burning pyre of her husband. He expressed his true feelings, when Deeti asked her about saving her, "It was myself I saved today, he said in a whisper. Because if you had died, I couldn't have lived; jinda na rah sakela"... (SOP 179)

The couple flees and unites, they love and respect each other, moreover Deeti needed a man in her life to protect her from prowling men and other possible perils a lone woman has to face. This is not acceptable to the high class villagers. In order to escape Deeti's in-laws, she and Kalua become indentured servants on the *Ibis*.

it was because her new self; her new life, had been gestating all this while in the belly of this creature, this vessel that was the Mother – Father of her new family, a great wooden mabap, an adoptive ancestor and parent of dynasties yet to come; here she was, the *Ibis* (SOP 356, 357)

On this coast, near old Kolkata, a *raja* entertains British merchants and seaman abroad his budgerow. There is champagne and chicken and talk of forthcoming Chinese hostilities. But the bonhomie masks a perilous

situation for the *raja*: he owes money to a prominent Liver pudlian trader and, with opium profits down, the thumbscrews are tightening. The *raja* is soon framed for fraud and bankrupted; notice of his crime is branded on his forehead; he is exiled and ruined.

Zachary Reid, a mulatto American sailor, receives a lot of attention. He has been on the Ibis since the schooner started her strenuous journey, and hopes to die with it. He maintains that in his life time he has never seen a more commendable item than the Ibis and it is no less than a mother to him, supporting him in his lonely and dark hours and rejoicing with him in his excuberance. With the support of the head of the lascars, Serang Ali he becomes the second in command of the ship, when it was refitted to carry indentured labourers to the island of Mareech or Mauritius instead of the tradable opium.

The novel also features Paulette, a French Orphan, who has also grown up in India. Her father was an eccentric but kind Botanist and her mother died in childbirth. She is brought up by Jodu's mother and her father but Mr. and Mrs. Burnham take Paulette into their home after her father's demise. She has determined to run away because Mr. Burnham has behaved in a disturbing way with her in private. Also, he is trying to get her married to his friend, the stern, elderly Justice Kendalbushe. Paulette had met Zachary Reid, the American sailor, at the dinner at the Burnham's; she is instantaneously drawn to him, and he to her. She has resolved to travel to Mauritius, as her great aunt did in the hope of finding a better future. Along with Jodu, unaware of her destiny she boards the Ibis. Paulette easily disguised herself as an Indian woman, using her fluent Bengali which she learned in childhood growing up at close propinquity with Jodu and his mother. Paulette's upbringing in India has also made her feel more at ease with Indian etiquettes, food and clothing than with Western ones.

On their way across the Black waters, these characters are exposed to Sati or widow-burning, a shipboard mutiny, murder, a court case, jails, kidnappings, rapes, floggings, a dinner party and every refinement of sex. Sea-sickness killed a few and the fortunate rest recovered from it.

Sea Of Poppies, the first of Ibis trilogy, provides a space for co-existence. Here members of lower section of society face insult and exploitation publically and individually and therefore, when they find a chance to move away from their native land, they decide to go far away. Although the prevailing circumstances force them to leave the place, it is ultimately their choice. This mixed kind of diaspora consists of force and choice. The people of deprived sects are already dissatisfied with the prevailing life. The members of *Ibis* as Deeti, Kalua, Paulette, Neel, Ah Fatt and other passengers share a common past of disrespect and filth and as the result of this they unite on the ship to generate a new identity. It brings to them freedom and individuality. On the ship identity transformation and rebuilding takes shape. All passengers are girmits from different places, heading towards one destination that is Mareech island. Deeti and Kalua hide their actual identity because they wanted to live a new life with rapidly changing situations and locations. Also, it is rather a gaining of true and respectful identity. For Deeti, it is reassuring her new name.

In a separate basti, outside the village, there lived Kalua, a low cast cart owner of colossal strength. Amitav Ghosh has drawn his character with an eye of a researcher and presented the minute details with all his repressed desires, bondages to unreasonable tradition and as a victim of cultural constructs of caste. During the progress of the narrative, the novelist tries to project his subaltern consciousness to expose his doubly marginalized status. The first appearance of Kalua in the early pages of the novel clearly highlights novelist's intension to present him as an individual bearing the

pangs of castism. His arrival at Deeti's door to fetch her husband to Gazhipur factory and his efforts "to keep his face, hidden from him"(SOP 4) were enough to highlight his untouchable status.

Kalua, the driver of the ox-cart, was a giant of a man, but he made no move to help his passenger and was careful to keep his face hidden from him: he was of the leather workers' caste and Hukum Singh, as a high-caste Rajput, believed that the sight of his face would bode ill for the day ahead. (SOP 4)

It is the height of mockery that Hukum Sing could sit on his cart, can talk to him on different topics but could not look into his face owing to the fear of being contaminated. As far as the physical strength of Kalua was concerned, he was the most towering figure of the village owing to his "Unusual height and Powerful build". (SOP 53)His physical strength astonished everybody but the curse of caste even turns his quality to his weakness and he was mainly exploited by the high caste people owing to his physical strength. The most prominent family of Ghazipur's Thakur Sahib made him the victim of their whims. He was compelled to fight wrestling matches just for their favourite pastime. Later when he started to win the matches, he became a source of income for them and in return of it Kalua got an ox-cart on which he may earn his living.

Several wrestling matches followed and Kalua had won them all, defeating the local pehlwans and strong men with ease. The young landlords earned a good profit, and Kalua was soon in possession of his reward. (SOP 54)

The sports loving landlords often used their powers to the weak creature like Kalua. In a heart-rending incident they made him their easy prey in a very un-natural and heinous way. Like a subaltern he could not raise his voice against the inhuman treatment given to him by them. He bore their behavior calmly without uttering single word of complaint against them. By chance Deeti could observe this incident, keeping herself hidden in

poppy fields, as she came out in night to fetch water from the river. She saw that these landlords were carrying a man with a halter around his neck like a horse. The man was none other than Kalua who had been incessantly suffering under the hegemonic powers of landlords. For Deeti such an inhuman treatment of a man was entirely strange. She too belonged to the weaker section and very well knew how hegemonic powers subdue the fate of those who were powerless. She was weak for the gender and Kalua was weak for his caste.

Kalua, in a way undoubtedly represents the caste subalterns. Being related to subaltern studies group, Amitav Ghosh has drawn his character distinctly with a humanistic approach. In the beginning he has been presented as a meek subservient and weak creature, subservient to the will of others and to be fooled by people owing to his slow brain and untouchable status. He frankly accepted his caste 'Chamar' and never felt conflict regarding it. To protect his identity, he even broke the walls those used to separate centre from the margins. His self determination impressed others present on the ship so much as he ultimately got his freedom with them demolishing the snares of hegemonic powers. Amitav Ghosh in *Sea Of Poppies* has been successful in exposing the crude reality of caste binarism existing within the social structure. The distinction of Ghosh's vision lies in investigating the full humanity of the dehumanized subalterns and he finally takes the ground to construct their identity that can enable them to make spaces in the main stream of caste based oppressive mechanism of social order.

Ghosh makes Zachary, who himself is a marginal subject, to rewrite the scripts of lives for the hypermarginalized people like Deeti, Kalua and Jodhu. Zachary realizes his agency and takes them on board with a feeling that one day he will come good for them. From debtors, convicts and bonded

coolies, the people on the Ibis became migrants who have at least the possibility of inventing new names and new histories. Zachary, a son of an African slave and her white American master, knows that he will be bound to a brutal history and the stigma of colour. For him, the mask of ship's second mate is a means of moving into water where no colour lines exist.

Regarding the protagonist of the novel, there has been long debate and discussion but majority of reviewers and readers consider Deeti Singh as the central character of the novel. Even Amitav Ghosh has a similar opinion in this regard as he describes:

Deeti was, for me, the central character in this book: whenever I was at a loss, I always looked to her to help me out, and somehow she always came through. But I also came to love many of the other characters, especially Paulette, Zachary, Baboo Nob Kissin, Neel and Jodu. Mrs. Burnhum is not on stage very long, but she quickly became another favourite (Interview with Michelle Casewell, Asia Source, 18 March 2008) (qtd. in. Sharma 190)

Deeti Singh, is the central character of the novel, married as a young teenager to a man whose dependence on opium makes him an inadequate husband both physically and economically. She fears her sadistic, immoral and leering slack-jawed brother-in-law, as she was impregnated on her wedding night by him. Kalua, of colossal strength and resources, the low-caste ox-cart driver, saves her when she is forced to sit on her husband's funeral pyre and commit Sati. All these impending circumstances make her to elope with Kalua and she also joins the club of poppy farmers. Though when she has no options left other than facing the stark reality of poverty and life, both decide to join the crew of the Ibis and go to Mareech as girmityas. This state of novel is the most moving, poignant and heart rending one as she leaves her six years daughter in the lurch. She knows she is never going to return as she is going to land of unknown geography.

It was on Deeti's lips to identify herself as Kabutri-ki-ma, the name by which she had been known ever since her daughter's birth her proper, given name was the first to come to mind and since it had never been used by anyone. It was as good as any. "Aditi, she said softly, I am Aditi, wife of Madhu". (SOP 233)

And here, for the first time the contextual relevance of her name proves her contemporary condition; Aditi was a woman granted by a boon of living her life again. This is recasting of the mythical history. Moreover, this is their internal, psychological journey of self development. As a matter of fact, in the homeland where the centre is established in a closed society there is a dominant class structure. All sort of binaries are functioned and power game is in practice and individuality is hampered but on the contrary the in between space on the ship that is called the margin, those boundaries seem blurring. Deeti represents high class Rajput woman, Kalua is a dalit subaltern, Paulette is an orphan. Ah Fatt as a child with biological and cultural hybridity and so on but on the ship they call themselves 'Jahaj bai' and 'Jahaj bahen'.

The very impression Diaspora theory gives is about loss of identity and thus the quest and search for identity ends in the identity crisis. Diaspora is a theoretical conceptualization of experiencing migration and its revision of past, tradition, culture, identity, language issues, nostalgia, trauma, and so on. Diaspora has a journey factor in its root; a journey within journey with no repetitive episodes.

The island of Fiji, Caribbean, Mauritius and others are called Plantation colonies where indenture labours from South Asia were migrated. They have been described as hostile lands with crisis of survival. Identity develops through shifting situations. Diaspora is all about people's life journey that could be physical, mental or intellectual enterprise. When

migration takes place, for some time there may be past reminiscences attached with a deeply rooted sense of life memory but with a period of time one gets ingrained in situation and a new identity is created. Such notion is well taken in contemporary dialogues on diasporic experience of displacement.

During late 18th century, Afghanistan had been the chief producer and supplier of opium to Europe but in early 19th century, the time period which has been depicted in the novel, British fortune seekers in India converted the fertile banks of Ganges where the crops of pulses and wheat were raised once, into a sea of poppies. In spite of the orders of China to ban the opium trade, they forced refined opium to be shipped out to Canton. Finally they persuaded London to wage the opium war, just denouncing the Chinese restrictions on free trade. It affected the life of native Indians adversely and brought them to severe poverty, starvation etc. The marginalized section of the society suffered the most owing to the attitude of British rulers. The novel begins in this period of crisis and shows the eastern region of Bihar.

Imperialism has traditionally, culturally and linguistically blended Indian ethos with the Europeans sensibilities. The novel is a commentary on socio-cultural evolution of Indian subaltern society, a saga of struggle by the destitute and wretches of imperial India and the dispassionate and doleful account of the Indian peasantry forced into opium cultivation, the story of their subsequent, impoverishment and destitution. The evil design of the British is illustrated in following terms.

As a family, their experience lay in the managing of kings and courts, peasants and dependents; although rich in land and property, they had never possessed much by way of coinage, they disclaimed to handle themselves, preferring to entrust it to a legion of agents, gomustas and poor relatives. When the old Zemindar's coffers began to swell, he tried to convert his silver into immovable wealth of the kind he best understood –

land, houses, elephants, horses, carriages, and of course, a budgerow more splendid than any other craft then sailing, on the river. But with the new properties there came a great number of dependents who had all to be fed and maintained; much of the new land proved to be uncultivable; and the new houses quickly became an additional drain since the Raja would not suffer them to be rented. (SOP 85, 86)

The East India Company is piling unpredictable wealth by growing opium and illegally exporting it to China. The Chinese are hell-bent to curb a trade that is rapidly undermining the economy by turning millions of them into addicts of opium. As the Chinese stood up in their defense and banned the import of opium, the Company took its revenge by waging a war on China under the garb of freedom. The poor Indian peasant actually suffered the brunt of this opium war. Peasant farmers have been obliged to turn over their fields to opium production, and this causes widespread poverty, hunger and slavery because lands that had once a means of sustenance were now deluged with rising tide of poppies. The British forced everyone to grow poppy in place of useful and lifeline crops like wheat, paddy, pulses and vegetables. Infact, the novel is set in an era of agricultural scam: when the Western demands for profitable but inedible crops which cause starvation in the subaltern world. “a few clumps of poppy were enough to provide for a household’s needs leaving a little over, to be sold: no one was inclined to plant more because of all the work it took to grow poppies” (SOP 29)

The Fiction of Amitav Ghosh reveals his prime obsession with history. He gives a new dimension to History even when he fictionalizes the fact. As his fiction is replete with political, historical and social consciousness, he excels his contemporaries, and shapes his novels according to the need of History. Therefore, the fact is fictionalized without any loss of grace and dignity adds the charm of reading. In *Sea of Poppies* the fact of opium wars remains the chief theme, yet the characters, dialogues and language are supporting factors. David Robson says rightly: If opium

were the dominant theme of *Sea Of Poppies*, it would probably be a less interesting book. Instead, Ghosh has used the voyage of the Ibis as a centerpiece of a much broader canvas, a setting human diaspora in which every character has a story to tell and every passenger is on the run from someone to something.

“If history forgets, fiction can remind us of many things”. Amitav Ghosh. (qtd. in Singh SK).

The novel delineates the utter helplessness of Indian laborers and farmers as the insatiable appetite of the British revenue rendered them crippled, marooned, exploited and defenceless. The crafty and cunning business of British has snatched India of its riches, freedom and peace; and Chinese of their discretion and wisdom by poisoning them with opium.

Post colonialism is in effect a metamorphosed version of postmodernism in relation to the anti-colonialist and decolonizing practice in oriental and Third World Countries. *Sea Of Poppies* is typically postcolonial response to the collective past of Asia. It is a rational attempt to present human condition, the postmodern stage of it, at the level of individual emotions and destinies, and at level of nations as players in the international arena. It challenges the grand narrative of capitalism: capital accumulation through free trade, leading to overall well being through all trickle down effect, and the whole nation's developing due to the way in which the invisible hand direct the market. These grand narratives of the colonial era are challenged effectively in this novel that occurs an alternative point of view very strongly and convincingly.

Ghosh exposes the dilapidating plight of women in ancient and colonial India who are subjected to suffer numerous persecutions at the hands of men who have been treating women only an object of quenching

carnal desire and household maid servants. Enforcing protagonist Deeti Singh to sit on her husband's funeral pyre and commit sati, and the life which her six-year-old daughter must expect including her marriage in another three or four years, diffuse a staunch smell of gender biasing.

The other female characters on the deck, whether it is Heeru, Munia, Champa, Ratna or Dookhanee, have a common past of patriarchal society and they abandon restrictions of complex society and go ahead identify themselves as indentures on a strange land. They desire to leave their complicated past experience and seek betterment in future. They build up an egalitarian community which is classless and casteless.

Patriarchal set up of Indian society in the pre-colonial period is beautifully portrayed by Amitav Ghosh. The author focuses on almost every character belonging to different levels of society. The different incidents that take place in the characters' lives are interconnected. This is the most striking feature in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea Of Poppies*. *Sea Of Poppies* advocates a deep commitment of human values. Purabi Panwar, an eminent scholar has written in one of her articles:

Sea Of Poppies, the first of a trilogy by Amitav Ghosh, is his most ambitious work so far. Spanning over three continents and two centuries, it does not only explore colonial migration, specifically indentured labour at length, but looks at the changing relationships at social and personal levels that it brought about. (Sharma 124)

Upriver, the Ibis is preparing to set sail for Madagascar, loaded with a cargo of coolies and convicts. Its captain is more interested in smoking than steering, and leaves proceedings to his sadistic first mate. Out at sea, conditions deteriorate as boredom fans the flames of cruelty. The serang has a specially sharpened toenail for kicking sailors and local justice prevails.

The outline of events is barely skeletal: as in his previous novels, Ghosh juggles a huge cast, weaving in overlapping strands and themes: racial porosity, imperialist hypocrisy, cultural relativism. It is characteristic of his scope to have an entire vessel of protagonists. The Opium Wars have not even started, though it is implied that the Ibis will later be involved in them. There are various tantalizing hints of an auspicious future for the characters. One will find a dynasty, another is starting a religion, all are destined to end up in a shrine.

Sea Of Poppies, is a historical novel is also a love legend flowering both on land and water. It is infact the account of thriving global trade, addictions, greed betrayal, caste, race and power. Thoroughly researched, Ghosh meticulously creates the culture of 19th century India in the early grips of foreign occupation and that of searching adventures, pirates and mercenaries. It is set in a time when the East India Company discovered that among the varied natural resources across the vast expanse of India, the land and climate of the north central Gangetic plains offered one more lucrative opportunity of raising revenues for the British crown which had the additional enticing value of becoming the gateway of China. Some quantities of the opium produced in India entered the local markets and it was also utilized for medical purposes in the form of morphine, an effective pain killer and anesthetic. But a large portion of the raw opium was exported to China, the other large Asiatic nation whose wealth and resources the Brits eyed hungrily and whose rulers, fearful of the Europeans intent in Asia, had adamantly barred entry to foreigners. Apart from the complicated shenanigans of opium trafficking, the novel also introduces us to another British export – the first large scale relocation to Indian labourers to Africa, the Caribbeans and the far east as indentured servants, slaves with a new name.

The novel ends rather suggestively with the Ibis, storm-tossed, near Sumatra. This indicates what lies ahead for the migrants. The end is all too fitting as it defeats the purpose of the unscrupulous British merchant, Benjamin Burnham who wants to take the fugitives, convicts and indenture farmers to Mauritius to make them work in sugar cane fields for the British as slaves. The shipwreck at least leaves all the marginalized people free for a while, though not certain of their survival. Ghosh suggests that land, be it Britain or India, is never free of class, patriarchy and racism. And, water with its indeterminacy is the only site where margins can create a humanistic alchemy.

Sea Of Poppies creates a world made of few privileged ones and masses of oppressed exploited, subjects. The lives of the marginalized subjects in this novel are conditioned and dictated by movements of people, commerce and empire. Opium trade and sugar cane cultivation in Mauritius and Fiji by the British are such movements that throw shadows on the lives of the natives like Deeti and Jodu.

Assefa Mehretu and Lawrence M.Sommers explain that marginality is at once multidimensional and multidisciplinary issue. They argue that marginality is social and spatial. Marginality that results from competitive inadequacy is termed contingent marginality. Marginality arising out of the proximity to a marginalized group is collateral marginality. Further, there is systematic marginality “that results from disadvantages which people and communities experience in a socially constructed system of inequitable relations within a hegemonic order that allows one set of individuals and communities to exercise undue power and control over another set with the latter manifesting one or a number of vulnerability markers based on class, ethnicity, age, gender and other similar characteristics”. (qtd.in.Sharma 36). The characters in *Sea Of Poppies* represent all these paradigms of

marginality. Raja Neel Rattan is a victim of contingent marginality. Zachary gets marginalized with his proximity to the marginalized groups like the Lascars, coolies and convicts. Deeti, Jodu and Kalua are at the receiving end of systematic marginality as they display varied markers of vulnerability. Deeti's spatial freedom is restrained by her gender and that of Kalua is determined by his caste.

The Kirkus Reviews declares *Sea Of Poppies* as – A historical novel crammed almost to the bursting point with incidents and characters, this astonishing; mesmerizing launch will be hard to top. *Sea Of Poppies* is a historical novel, which means that the story is only half the story.

At a more every day level, Ghosh fashions an index of early 19th century Indian cuisine, servants, furnishings, sacred worship, and naval commands, man and woman attires and under linen, trades, nuptials and last rites, botany and horticulture, opium farming, intoxicating drinks, grades of clerk and, criminal justice, sexual practices, conventional medicines etc. Against the inhuman background of Poppy cultivation, *Sea Of Poppies* paints a heartrending picture of the human destruction of this trade.

If Salman Rushdie is considered as a master of craftsman by the critics for his epoch – making novel *Midnight's Children* that gave a big boost to Indian novel in English, Amitav Ghosh deserves all the encomiums that come his way for his masterpiece, *Sea Of Poppies*. He writes with an anthropologist's precision, taking care to situate his characters and themes in a well-defined historical context. He loves to dwell in those little-explored spaces where cultures intersect and identities emerge, classes collide and languages melt into each other, and equipped with his gift for lucid prose and power to relate in a way that is at once modest and deep, comes away as being extremely convincing for his pains. Another rare gem from Bengal, Amitav Ghosh considers himself as a torch bearer in the field of Indian

writing in English. Amitav Ghosh's vibrant experiences are clearly reflected in his writings. Since his father was in Indian Foreign Service, Amitav Ghosh had the rare privilege of travelling extensively to different countries. Due to the nature of his father's job, Amitav Ghosh managed to visit different countries like USA, U.K, Egypt, Burma etc. Ghosh, skillfully blends the real life incidents into his fictional narratives.

An eminent writer Shashi Tharoor opines:

His descriptions bring a lost world to life, from the evocatively imagined opium factory, the intricacies of women's costumes and the lovingly enumerated fare on the opulent dining tables of the era, to the richly detailed descriptions of the Ibis and its journey. At times, *Sea Of Poppies* reads like a cross between an Indian *Gone with the Wind* and a Victorian novel of manners. (Sharma 123)

Optimism is the hallmark of Amitav Ghosh's characters in *Sea Of Poppies*. Though the characters are continuously suffering, they never lose hope under any circumstances. Baboo Nob Kissin's past is also depicted by Amitav Ghosh in detail. His aunt Taramony loses her soul mate at a very early stage and Baboo Nob Kissin is forced to accompany her to Kolkata in order to get rid of the bad memories. Now, their only mission is to build a temple for Lord Krishna and for accomplishing this, both of them literally slog day in and day out. Unfortunately Taramony finally breathes her last leaving Baboo Nob Kissin in great agony. In her deathbed, Taramony commands Baboo Nob Kissin not to commit hara-kiri but to concentrate fully on their mission. So he is eagerly looking forward to his journey in the sea by Ibis.

Neel's position gets really shaky as days roll by. The English East India company decides to incarcerate him to put an end to his misery. The entire retinue of Neel's supporters gathers to witness the drama. The

responsibility for bringing Neel to the penitentiary falls on Major Hall. To everyone's surprise, Neel co-operates whole-heartedly with the officials and the officials assure him release as early as possible.

Even minute things are given a lot of importance by Amitav Ghosh in his work *Sea Of Poppies*. He takes great pains to highlight the problem of untouchability that was prevalent during the pre-independence era. The characters Deeti and Kalua are terribly frightened of the consequences, once they manage to escape from the elders.

to cover the distance by road would be to risk being recognized: news of their flight was sure to have spread by this time, and in the event of capture, they knew they could expect no mercy, even from their own kin. (SOP 191)

Mother's unadulterated love for her daughter at all costs is brilliantly captured by Amitav Ghosh through the relationship between Deeti and her daughter Kabutri. Man's instinct for survival makes him to do strange things. Deeti who was not showing any keenness for going to any far-away land is desperately keen to go at once. The desire for survival relegates her motherly duties to the background. Deeti urges Kalua. "Is this time to stand there like a tree? Come! Let's go" (SOP 225)

The historicism that Dipesh Chakrabarty talks about, which is used as a tool, is one of the concepts that Ghosh tackles through his narrative. Ghosh refuses to add any premonitions about future concepts and thereby pre-empts historicist para-framing. When this assertion is examined in *Sea Of Poppies*, one comes across so many questions. The security of property, moderate taxation, tenure of land, the strategist mode of intellectual enhancement and the introduction of industry – capital – of all these find a very different and locationally immediate expression of this novel. The understanding of capital is seen from two very different perspectives, from that of the

subaltern on the one hand and from the landed rich native on the other. The continuous presence of both lends a dialogical path of this novel.

The very hungry tide of British capitalism took the colony by storm and even resilient characters such as Deeti and Neel Rattan Halder are helpless in the swing that the financial world experiences. Both of their identities are established with respect to the society and customs they know and both of them are initially surprised by the nature of changes that occur within their lives; however, both of them are strong and careful enough to quickly adapt to and manipulate the situation they are in. Deeti and her family find Calcutta wonderful because here, people do not cultivate the crops that they will eat; here, they find a system which is completely different.

It is calamity that brings out the positive trait of human beings. In order to tide over their weary journey, the women try to sing together. “Kaise kate ab biraha ki ratiya? how will it pass this night of parting”.(SOP 398) The women in the ship make an earnest attempt to enjoy each other’s company. Deeti encourages Paulette to join the other singers, though Paulette does not exactly know the words of the song. Deeti motivates Paulette saying. “It does not matter whether you know the words. Sing anyway or the night will be unbearable”. (SOP 398)

Amitav Ghosh, within the text *Sea Of Poppies* has been successful in exposing the crude reality of caste binarism existing within the social Structure. The distinction of Ghosh’s vision lies in investigating the full humanity of the dehumanized subalterns and he finally takes the ground to construct their identity that can enable them to make spaces in the main stream of caste based oppressive mechanism of social order.

Louis Montrose describe the new historicism as “a, reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and the textuality of his history”. (Abram 183). History is conceived not to be a set of fixed, objective facts, but like the literature with which it interacts, a text which itself needs to be interpreted. Any text, on the other hand, is conceived as a discourse which although it may seem to present, or reflect, an external reality, in fact consists of what are called representations --- that is, verbal formation which are the ideological products or cultural – constructs of the historical conditions specific to an era.

The historical novel not only takes setting and some characters and events, from history but makes the historical events and issues crucial for the central characters and narrative.

Some of the greatest historical novels also use the protagonists and actions to reveal what the author regards as the deep forces that impel the historical process.

It would not be an exaggeration to ascertain what has already been said – Ghosh’s writings are a true reflection of society. The novel is an epitome of realistic depiction set in the period of Opium wars, where history forms the backdrop against which the lives of unfortunates are depicted quite realistically. The novel accommodates people from multifarious backgrounds drawn towards a common destiny. The blend of people from different backgrounds is such that one gets a glance at varied cultural backgrounds – Zachary, a mulatto; the lascars and girmithiyas are again chosen from different castes and classes with their own rituals and cultures, and there are a host of other English characters like Mr. Burnham and Paulette. The characters that picture in this book mostly consist of people from the margins who become the representatives of unfortunate people across the globe. It is quite interesting to note that the lives of many

characters are re-fashioned by sweep of socio-political and historical events they have no control on.

The difference between writers and historians Ghosh said is that the two ask different questions about a particular time in history. “The question that historians don’t ask is what they wear, what did they eat, it is different from what novelists do”. As a novelist, Ghosh said that he is trying to create a sense of lived history and inhabit that place. A novel is not reflecting reality, it is creating reality.

The issue of immigration and the atrocities meted out to the indentured labour are depicted quite vividly through the experiences of the ‘coolies’ aboard the *Ibis* as they are shipped to an unknown territory. It is useful here to focus on the issue of indentured labour, a favourite theme with Amitav Ghosh. The migrants’ part of the ship has been described as:

the tween deck, known to the lascars as the ‘box’ or dabusa. it was still as grim, dark and foul-smelling as he remembered – merely an enclosed floor, with arched beams along the sides – but its chains and ring – bolts were gone and a couple of heads and piss-dales had been added. The dabusa inspired a near superstitious horror in the crew. (SOP 319)

There is also chokey in the *Ibis* that means there will be convicts on board. The chokey is mentioned as:

The cell was as cramped as a chicken coop and as airless as a snake-pit: apart from a lidded port hole in its door, it had only one other opening, which was a tiny air duct in the bulwark that separated it from the coolies’ dabusa. (SOP 320)

The system of transporting indentured labour to far-off places facilitated the rulers with ample hands to labour throughout their lives. This system indirectly meant slavery with an altered name where the lives of the ‘girmityas’ were bound to the whims and fancies of their lords and their

lives are at the disposal of their owners to whom they had bargained not only their bodies but also their souls.

When a migrant did run off, the guards brought him back. One day one boy became delirious and he died. The sildars and maistries paid no attention to his cremation, instead: “a hole had been bored in his skull and his corpse had been hung up by the heels, to extract the oil – *mimiai-ka-tel* – from his brain” (SOP 340)

The journey motif stands clear and loud through the book and the ship ‘Ibis’ becomes a platform for many unfortunates to come together as a family and their brotherhood surpasses all boundaries of discrimination. They are a proof to unity that could stand as a solution to merge all imaginary boundaries irrespective of cast and creed. From time to time the migrant’s prayer could be heard singing a few lines of song.

My raft’s adrift in the current your mercy is my refuge
(SOP 374)

The vessel that carries a multifarious sect of people at once becomes a vehicle to realize dreams and to earn money for the rulers and an illusionary vehicle of transport to the coolies. Their destiny is unknown and even they do not know what inhabits the land they are being taken to. One of the passengers of the ship Jhugaroo tells a story about the jungles of Mareech (Mauritius) and other were scared to hear this, he said:

how the younger and weaker migrants were destined to be used as bait for the wild animals that lived in those forest. His voice could be heard through the whole dabusa, and it terrorized the women, especially Munia, who broke down in tears. (SOP 389)

The fear of being uprooted and dislocated forever is evident in such anticipation. The characters act as agents who mirror the lives of indentured labour – who were driven by their fates to far off places in order to survive.

The ship also symbolizes corruption and slavery as it was built to serve as a 'blackbirder', a vessel to transport slaves. The formal abolition of slavery transforms the vessel into a carrier of girmithiyas. There were rules for the rationing of drinking water, were new and unfamiliar to the coolies.

It is a relevant undertaking to highlight the issue of power here. There are various manifestations of power and in this novel the issue of power is a major theme, introduced mainly through the story of a royal family's encounter with the British. The issue of exploitation of power can be introduced here where Neel is wrongly accused of forgery and is sent to prison as an ordinary person. Their family is completely ripped off of power and forced to live on consideration of their employee. This system of exile can be understood clearly through the notion of power proposed by French philosopher Michael Foucault. According to Foucault

Power is something that a group of people or an institution possesses and it is concerned with oppression and constraint. He states that power is often conceptualized as the capacity of powerful agents to realize their will over the will of powerless people, and the ability to force them to do things which they do not wish to do. Power is also seen as a possession, something which is held onto by those in power and which those who are powerless try to wrest from their control. (qtd. in Jha 95)

Another man who possessed power was Subedar Bhyro Singh, the leader of the paltan and his treatment towards the convicts in the ship is explained by Ghosh in the novel as Bhyro Singh pretended that,

'they were a pair of plough-oxen and he a farmer, tilling a field, seemed to give him endless delight; he would loop their chains around their necks, in such a way that they were forced to stoop as they walked; then, shaking their fetters like reins, he would make a clicking, tongue-rolling noise as he drove them along, occasionally slicing at their legs with his lathi. It wasn't just that the infliction of pain gave him pleasure

(though this was no small part of it): the blows and insults were also intended to show everyone that he, Bhyro Singh, was uncontaminated by the degraded creatures who has been placed in his power (SOP 383)

Working conditions in those days were so pathetic and more deplorable than these was the treatment meted out to those miserable workers who worked in the most unhygienic and unhealthy conditions. They were caned or whipped even for trivial mistakes.

Sea Of Poppies is about seeking freedom. A galaxy of characters like poppy seeds arises in the context and most of the characters are transgressors and they experience class or race discrimination. They are exotic and psychologically rich as well as complex and each character helps portray the novel colourfully. These men and women are having limited capacity and they are powerless and cannot establish themselves as individuals. They go through ordeals in their crusade of quest for identity and their right to survive according to their own will. Their stories compel us to think about the culture, heritage, history and identity of individuals as well. It would be appropriate to sum up by stating that the novel is a blend of issues related to the people who thrive on the margins. By voicing several issues through the marginalized, Ghosh bestows agency to the silenced, an opportunity to highlight the forgotten, neglected stories.

The first novel in the trilogy is left deliberately incomplete by the author, so that the readers wait in anticipation for the next work to arrive at the earliest. Truly, Amitav Ghosh succeeds in striking a chord with the readers through his novel, *Sea Of Poppies* and proves his class yet again.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMING-UP

Modern Indian authors have great interest in humanity and civilization. In the same order, Amitav Ghosh entered in the ocean of words to go more deep with human tendency. Basically he is an anthropologist educated in India, Alexandria and Oxford. At the outset his primary theme is the Diaspora and later on he continues with related themes like emigration, exile, cultural displacement and transnational cultural flow and so on. Nation is not only the subject to Ghosh's imaginary it deserves numerous interpretations. By choosing nation he weighs against Salman Rushdie, yet he deals many other habitat of human life. He puts important value to familiar life either to joint or nuclear. For him it works as the central imaginative unit. To highlight it he employs variety of narrative techniques, genres and storytelling, styles to invent a 'never land' which again sticks together to reality. In this way he abruptly merges the borders of narrative aesthetics and effects radical transformation of reality. Ghosh's fiction repeatedly works to patch up the edge between literary facet and political dogma of contemporary world.

Ghosh's fictional world is a twitchy description of social activities and his protagonists are explorer and deals with disaporic exiles. They can be marked for the good replica of "the migrant sensibility". He is acknowledged by many as the finest practitioner of the genre among those who emerged out of the post-Midnight's children boom in Indian English fiction in the 1980s. He has written consistently good novels and non-fictional prose works which have won great acclaim both in India and abroad. Ghosh has been the subject of many critical works and many more are likely to be published due to his growing global popularity. Critics have

recognized his extraordinary virtuosity as a faithful chronicler of the contemporary world, one who enhanced our knowledge of buried histories and has borne an eloquent witness to some of the momentous events of our times.

Amitav Ghosh started writing about India as a country which is globally interlinked with other nations and activities of the world. India's potential, as one of the most ancient but still persisting and flourishing civilizations, becomes a literary property with its really interesting story or stories to tell. The many tellers of this Indian tale take to different routes of narration.

Ghosh could concentrate on the 'story' because a typical haunting or ghostliness, which he has sometimes described as a 'epiphanic' moments, characterizes his writerly search for compelling fiction. Ghosts have their stories to tell, and of course, in a significant sense they have histories or they are history. Since our past lives are inscribed in a given cultural set up, they definitely come to haunt our present historical contexts. Ghosts do haunt our notions of identity because they germinate in a given place and time and the terms *genius loci* or "spirit of the place" and *zeitgeist* or "spirit of time", though rationally garbed, only point of this persistence of haunting that we have to content with while unraveling the mysteries of past civilizations and cultures. The 'ghostliness' of being suggests a disturbing reality where some aspects of life are no longer living and yet they are not quiet. The disquieting areas of history, suppressed or repressed by the axes of power, especially the white imperial and colonial power of Europe, and their cry for an adequate expression and for the exhuming of many dead bodies from the graveyards spread all over the world has given rise to the formidable body of 'post colonial studies'. Amitav Ghosh's continual engagement with Indian or, for that matter, South Asian histories and their consequent effects in the present

globalised scenario does make him look like a fashionable, and quite post colonial, writer of the day. His depiction of the lives of the marginalized and his attempt to articulate the subjugated voice of the subaltern many also liken him to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivik, though he is an eminent novelist and not an eminent critic. But primarily, Amitav Ghosh is a storyteller who has by now made his annoyance with ‘theories’ is very well-known fact about himself.

Ghosh’s writing is about psychological and sociological “truths” as reflected by the demonstration and action of his protagonists. His novels are particularly about characters developed overtime. This consciousness of time as an informing factor, as a universal, enables him to get involved with history. The colonizer’s written history, however, of the Indian subcontinent, or of Egypt, or the Arabian territory is obviously written as a part of the ruling discourse and tends to suppress or overlook many disturbing areas which, when written about, can potentially ‘talk back’ to the power-centre. Amitav Ghosh understands this and taps the colonizer’s history well in order to retrieve all our obscured and effaced roots of identity. Therefore all his significant protagonists travel far and wide in search of a revealing truth or shared commonality that now lies buried under the cover of an alien culture of a so-called foreign land.

Ghosh’s stories, known for their typical humanistic appeal, reveal the other figures and sources in his ethnic culture and roots in their mixing of lost stories with ethical concerns. Ghosh often resorts to these figures and sources in order to fashion his stories. Rabindranath Tagore and Satyajith Ray remain Ghosh’s moral mentors and they, like him, are known for maintaining a strict ethical code in their respective oeuvres. In noway however, can either Tagore or Ray be described as backward looking conservatives. Infact, both Tagore and Ray absorbed, in their own respective

ways, the best thing that the West had to offer and became truly cosmopolitan in their border, globalised vision of human history.

In June 1997 *The New Yorker* magazine published a special issue on English language Indian fiction to commemorate India and Pakistan's fiftieth anniversary of independence from colonial rule. Inside is a photograph of some of the most celebrated English language novelists to have emerged from the sub-continent in recent decades, writers whose presence on the best sellers lists of Western literary markets have been accompanied by the unprecedented density of their citations for major literary prizes – Salman Rushdie, Anitha Desai, Arundhati Roy, Rohinton Mistry, Amit Chaudhari and Vikram Seth amongst others. At the back, slightly out of focus is Amitav Ghosh; the perspective of the shot distances him and he appears somewhat marginal to main group. The photograph is a large one, taking up almost three-quarters of the double-page spread, but on its left-hand margin is some text, a fragment of an article on the “forgotten army” led by the Indian nationalist leader Subash Chandra Bose, which had fought the British alongside the Japanese in South East Asia during the Second World War: The Article is by Amitav Ghosh. This fortuitous layout perhaps emphasizes with appropriate clarity Ghosh's literary concern with margins – marginal people, histories, episodes, knowledge systems and beliefs.

Ghosh's earlier explorations of nationhood and diaspora, of relationships between the individuals and communities that transgress and transcend the shadow lines of political borders are extended in this most humanist of his novels. The ties bound by circumstance and endeavour, as well as those sealed by blood and kinship, generate communities of their own which intersect with but also move beyond the social boundaries of race, ethnicity, class, religion and nationality. The use of the family as a

trope in most of Ghosh's fiction, but particularly in *The Shadow Lines*, signals a very specific gesture away from the 'national allegory' that some critics have been tempted to see in 'Third world' fiction. He has stated that such misreading frustrates him and that for him; "the family is the central unit because it is not about the nation, you know? Families can actually span nations". (*Mondal 15*)

As in *An Antique Land*, this is a polygot diaspora, a network of hybrid identities but like that medieval world, it is also a fragile community, one which is violently uprooted at the close of the novel as these communities are displaced by war and embark on the long overland march from Burma and South-East Asia to take refuge in India. The recovery of this forgotten episode in the most documented conflict in history testifies to Ghosh's ongoing interest in 'subaltern pasts'.

In 1984, a momentous year for India, there was separatist violence in Punjab, a military attack on the Sikh temple of Amritsar, the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, there were riots following the assassination and there was the gas disaster in Bhopal. It was as if George Orwell's infamous date for the apocalypse had been set with India in mind. Many peoples' lives were irrevocably shaken by these events and it seems, Ghosh's was one of them, "Looking back", Ghosh writes, "I see that the experiences of that period were profoundly important to my development as a writer". (*Hawley 2*)

Already he was identifying writing as his 'real' life, distinct finally from his teaching and research. But the subjects he would choose to address and the style he would choose to employ were still in flux. The events of 1984 seem to have solidified his thinking in both regards.

The riots were directed principally against Sikhmen, and as their ramifications unfolded ‘it was not just grief I felt’ Ghosh writes ‘Rather it was a sense of something slipping loose, of a mooring coming united somewhere within’. Over 2500 died in Delhi alone. “Like many other members of my generation, writes Ghosh;

I grew up believing, that mass - slaughter of the kind that accompanied the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, could never happen again. But that morning, in the city of Delhi, the violence had reached the same level of intensity – How do you explain to someone who has spent a life time cocooned in privilege that a potentially terminal rent has appeared in the wrapping?. (qtd. in Hawley 3)

He has been writing *The Circle of Reason* in that “baking roof top hutch” and its style was very much in a Salman Rushdie vein of imaginative serio-comic storytelling – a flight of fancy that had only the loosest ties to actual historical events. But 1984 changed all that: it is as though the next novel, *The Shadow Lines*, was written by someone else entirely. Here the style is, if anything more sophisticated – but less fantastic. Here the history of partition is very real, indeed, but its broad strokes are used to paint a backdrop against which a personal struggle of the young protagonist and his family gets the spot light.

Amitav Ghosh’s writings, both fiction and non-fiction, have uncovered in the histories of nations, more instances of contact rather than insulation that interrogate essentialist notions of self, community and nation. They have also engaged with movements, within and without nation states, of ordinary people who moved voluntarily or were forced to move due to indenturement, trade and ethnic violence before and after partition of Indian subcontinent. Post-colonial studies have theorized displacement largely in relation to colonized cultures’ encounter with European others to construct a post colonial aesthetic of migrancy and hybridity. Dislocation is used as a

term for both the occasion of displacement as a result of imperial occupation and the experiences associated with the event. The term serves to cover the 'willing or unwilling movement from a known to an unknown location' and includes experiences ranging from invasions and settlement to slavery and imprisonment. While dislocation might be a common experience for those who have moved away from home, this "globalizing displacement theory fails to address local displacement issues and concerns. Postcolonialism's exclusive focus on the dislocating effects of colonisation has diverted interest from other dislocating movements in a community's history prior to and after colonialism, just as its preoccupation with movement out of the nation relegates intra-national displacements to the background. Postcolonial theory also appears to be fixated on the displacement of a select group of postcolonial individuals from their homelands and the metaphoric displacement of the colonized elite from indigenous knowledge system. Diaspora and post colonial theory needs to shift focus from colonization as a dislocating experience to the displacements caused by nationalist histories and geographies. Although Ghosh's fiction and non-fiction throw light on both pre-colonial and colonial movements and displacements in general, he focuses in particular on the dislocation caused by the formation of nations through the marking of what he has called "the shadow lines" across nations. Through uncovering these ongoing histories of migration and transnational flows that began several centuries ago as well as through the construction of borders, Ghosh interrogates the idea of the nation and borders.

Akil Gupta and James Ferguson have observed a motif of discontinuity in modernist organizations of space. They speak of the discontinuous space of modernity and nation states and the continuous space of globalization that is similar and yet different from the pre-national continuous space. One may add that while the discrete space of the nation is produced through borders, pre-national space is marked by boundaries.

While borders are fixed and clearly demarcated, boundaries are porous, shifting and indeterminate. However, unlike the borders of the past that were physical, modern borders that came into being with the formation of nation states are essentially political and are largely a matter of visas, passports and legalities. In his novel *The Shadow Lines* (1988), Ghosh captures this difference between boundaries and borders in the protagonist's grandmother's consternation when she is informed about there being no physical markers between India and Bangladesh. In contrast to modern national borders that are policed and implicated in issues of legality and illegality, pre-national boundaries were essentially permeable and permitted frequent crossing, as outlined by the tha'mma character in Ghosh's novel. "There weren't any forms or anything and anyway travelling was so easy then. I could come home to Dhaka whenever I wanted". (TSL 168)

Ghosh's writings focus on migration during the pre-national space, which was continuous and permitted boundary crossing, as well as on colonial and post colonial spaces. While critiquing the concept of borders, he engages with the frequency of boundary-crossing within and outside India, focusing on Bengal in particular, which challenges essentialist definitions of nations and societies. These movements convey the notion of separateness through the "historically situated subjectivities" of those who "dwell in travel". In the process, Ghosh's definition of borders unpacks a history of movements, travels and intercultural crossings that produce an understanding of space as defined in postmodern geographies.

Ghosh's writings give us a glimpse of the various pre-national global movements that belong to cultures of circulation imagined differently from the present one. As he puts it:

I am trying to see this global movement of people in a historical perspective. *Sea of Poppies*(2008) is a historical

novel about migration – both past and present. Don't call it rootless or alienation from the mother culture. Those are negative words. (Ghosh.T.K 69)

This circulation of people in the Indian Ocean was triggered by conquests, trade, indenturement and travel.

The Circle of Reason's itinerant and wayward picaresque echoes the intellectual caprices of its characters. This novel basically is a comic tale of dodgy juxtaposition and its protagonist Balram follows an obsessive combination of Hindu ideas of purity and Western notions of cleanliness with Louis Pasteur's microbiology. The eccentric version of reason is almost wiped out in the novel by forces of unreason: ambition, paranoia, territoriality and violence. The scientific approach and Balram's hallucination of social progress reflects Gandhi's nationalistic self-sufficiency and a global multinational economy in which technology recognizes no continents and no countries.

The Circle of Reason investigates and challenges Western claim of superiority of reason, both in theme and style. The novel makes an ironic commentary on the British education system and its sole concern with the propagation of rationality, through the failure of Balram and his protégé Alu. If the Victorian Utilitarian education system has produced self-centered "whelps" like Bitzer and Tom Gradgrind, then the colonial education system could only produce grotesque figures like Balram and Alu. Through the uncle nephew pair, Ghosh also examines the paradox inherent in the concept of reason which is liberating and oppressive; linear and straightforward and circular and convoluted; reasonable and unreasonable.

The use of the device of magical realism in narration also heightens the postcolonial critique of reason in the novel. Among the Indian English writers the brilliant works of Salman Rushdie blend magic and the real with

aesthetic delight. Whether it is his *Midnight's Children* (1981) or the controversial *The Satanic Verses* (1988) or *The Enchantress Of Florence* (2008), Rushdie uses the technique of magical realism to offer his critique of social, religious, cultural and political situations from a predominantly post-colonial vantage. Following Rushdie, a host of Indian writers have deployed magic realism in their novels. Amitav Ghosh might not figure in this list because of his preference for a more conventional mode of story-telling in his recent novels. *The Circle Of Reason* has showed that when necessary, he can also adopt the magic realist mode, even though with lesser degree of conviction than that of Rushdie.

Balram and Alu's ridiculous misadventures in the name of reason could not have been so aptly narrated in any other narrative device. A conventional realist narrative technique would have fallen flat. Ghosh deploys the magic-realist mode of narration in presenting Balram's irrational war against dirt and uncleanness. His preoccupation with phrenology, displayed in the narrative through his use of Claws, the destruction of the Saraswathi idol and the final war against Bhudeb Roy with carbolic acid, only tend to heighten his eccentricities. Balram's war against dirt and uncleanness, however irrational its mode may be, can also be seen, as a fight against the evils of capitalism. Magic realist texts of Marquez or Rushdie are often critical of the existing order, be it political, social, religious or existential. *The Circle of Reason* provides a satirical perspective on post - independence Indian politics that is beset with nepotism and corruption. Alu's survival in the fall of *The Star* due to the intervention of two sewing machines is not meant for realistic interpretation. The episode points rather to a mythical interpretation, a myth of regeneration of the twice-born protagonist. Trapped underneath the rubbles of concrete, Alu is offered an epiphany.

All genuine artists in this novel are in one way or the other trying to depict the loneliness of the contemporary human. Everyone understands as to what it means to be alone in a crowd. The human species has found itself in this new situation and it wants to express this sentiment. Immigrant communities have caught the imagination of the artist. Infact, often the artist is the immigrant. 'Home' as a metaphor has been lost. The native village is home; mother's lap is home; father's angry brows are home; elder brother's slap is home; one does not know as to where is home. Things have gone far off. Things that used to matter have been lost.

The Shadow Lines is a very different book and a surprise after *The Circle Of Reason* Ghosh alters his writing agenda and his style after 1984 because the riots in *The Shadow Lines* emerge from the author's memory only after the riots of 1984. Regarding the communal rioting in Srinagar, Calcutta and Dhaka in 1964, the narrator of *The Shadow Lines* remarks that:

it actually took me *fifteen years* to discover that there was a connection between my nightmare bus ride back from school and the events that befell Tridib, and the others in Dhaka... I believed in the reality of nations and borders. (TSL 241)

And in *The Circle Of Reason*, we see Ghosh's fascination with chance, reminiscent of the chance memory that launched the author's literary hero, Marcel Proust, into his vast autobiographical novel *Remembrance of Things Past*.

In his excellent study of several Ghosh's works, Robert Dixon notes that *The Shadow Lines* is "a fictional critique of classical anthropology's model of discrete cultures and the associated ideology of nationalism. The reality is the complex web of relationships between people that cut across nations and across generations". (Khair 20)

The presence of unnamed narrator gives novel its way to accomplish its theme of existence. The questions come in natural way that the cities and borders of country can make limited human effort to live his life without any attachment. No boundaries of physical map mean to a common man. The narrator is an imagined shadow of cosmopolitan cities. He often swings from story within story to place within place and finally to memory within actuality. *The Shadow Lines* makes a unique contribution to the debates over ‘difference’ and ‘otherness’ that have galvanized the contemporary postcolonial world.

R.K. Dhawan describes this book as a novel that resists classification:

It is basically a memory novel that weaves together past and present, childhood and adulthood, India and Bangladesh and Britain, Hindu and Muslims. It is a social document and a political novel, a Bildungsroman and a post modernist work of fiction. (Hawley 82)

The Shadow Lines which is admittedly set in post colonial India is one of the finest novels of Amitav Ghosh which won Sahitya Academy Award in 1989. Ghosh has tried to suffuse his sense of belonging, national identity, landscape, rituals, national culture and tradition which form the core of postcolonial fiction in the texture of *The Shadow Lines*. In this context, it would be apt to quote Silvia Albertazzi. In her essay “*Crossing the Shadow Lines*” ‘she writes’,

In my opinion, Amitav Ghosh’s novel *The Shadow Lines* is probably the most important fictional work to have appeared in South Asia Literature in the last decade. It sums up and fictionalizes all the major issues of postcolonial literature – the search for identity, the need for independence and the difficult relationship with colonial culture, the rewriting of colonial past, and attempt at creating a new language and a new narrative form and the use of personal memory to understand communal past. (Albertazzi)

She also points out that the plural in the title of Ghosh's novel marks the passage from the personal to the national in the story, while stressing the coming of age both of a man and of a nation. The passage is achieved by a particular use of memory, which is certainly reminiscent of what Conrad says about Chronological perspective in the 'Authors Note to *The Shadow Lines*.

The effect of perspective in memory is to make things loom large because the essentials stand out isolated from their surroundings of insignificant daily facts which have naturally faded out of one's mind. (qtd. in Albertazi)

Ghosh questions the infatuated affirmation of dissimilarity because of physical borders and celebrates the union of aliens pulled together by self-propelling compassion and affection. All the major associations and relationships in the novel rise above the existing fervor and chauvinism, ethnic detestation and communal bad blood springing from a escalating of boundaries and restrictions, that is, a conflict of national and cultural particularities. Ghosh has also given postcolonial hue to his characters while portraying them. Regarding characters in *The Shadow Lines*, Kobayashi writes:

Ghosh's characters are all provided with their mirror images. To name just a few: Tridib and the narrator as archaeologists, Ila and Tha'mma as pillarists, Tresawsen and Nick as mercantilists. By making mutually reflexive one gender / generation and another Ghosh exhibits what has remained in postcolonial India (Kobayashi56)

Ghosh is a very postcolonial author. In the words of Murari Prasad, "Evoking the post colonial trauma in the aftermath of India's separation from Pakistan, Ghosh visualizes the recuperative exercise of transnational imagination to overcome communitarian strain".(Murari Prasad 78).He dexterously employs all the postcolonial narrator's actions and behavior in

this novel. Ghosh provides his discerning voice to the other, the people inhabiting the marginal recesses of Empire, for they are often his protagonists. According to Bharucha:

Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* also subverts official version of history and provides ideological resistance to totalizing political discourses. Hence, the sordid machinations of politicians continue to divide Hindus and Muslims in postcolonial time and lead to bloodshed and death. The lines which colonial cartographers had drawn through the Indian land mass throw their dark shadows on events in decolonized India and Pakistan. (qtd.in.Sharma 17)

The Glass Palace, is the story of half-bred Rajkumar who revolves around Burma, Myanmar and India. He travels round many places freely and gains profit. Unexpectedly, his happiness ends when his son is killed by Japanese bombs blast. The reason for this calamity is fighting for national boundaries. Throughout *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh uses one end to signal the beginning of another so that at one level, nothing changes but yet everything does. There is a strong suggestion of Buddhist metaphysics in his technique. Life, death, success and failure come in cycles and Ghosh uses the concept of pair of binoculars early in the novel to sensitize the reading of this perspective.

His *The Glass Palace* is a historical saga, a comprehensive historical novel presenting the history of Burma, India and Malaya covering a period of a century from the fall of the Konbaung Dynasty in Mandalay through the Second World War to modern times. Within the narrative reconstruction of the history of Burma, he explores the issues ranging from the changing scenario of the landscape of Burma and India to the question that constitutes a nation how it effects the tide of modernity. Homi Baba admits that post colonial subjects suffer from both repression and repudiation. Carol Kresten about the novel *The Glass Palace* points out:

Apart from its absorbing story, what makes *The Glass Palace* into special book is the fact that in this history of the British Empire, there is hardly an Englishman in sight. The epoch is seen entirely through the eyes of locals the so called colonized people-or ‘subaltern’ as many post modern scholars from the Indian subcontinent like to call them. So in answer in the question raised by one of them in a debate on historiography – Can the subaltern speak? so we may apply with a whole hearted “Yes, most elegantly”. (Kresten)

In his 17th July 2000 interview with *Outlook*, Ghosh mentioned that his father’s family had lived in Burma for several generations. His motivation in writing such a novel, is first of all personal: it is an imaginative recollection of part of his family history – though we are left to imagine how much of the novel is factual. He feels a great attraction of the country. Part of his motivation, though, is to record a portion of history that might otherwise simply pass out a public record. Regarding the Long March, when Indian’s fled Burma fearing Japanese occupation – Ghosh told a reporter that:

It is not been written about at all.. It is strange – there were over half a million people on the Long March, over 400,000 of them Indian, and there is such a silence about it –There was no need for the Indian’s in Burma to flee when the Japanese approached – many Indian’s did stay back. It makes you realize to degree to which Indians felt themselves to be the sheep of the British: the delusions that governed their lives. (qtd. in. Hawley 113-4)

Ghosh’s world is peopled with characters that engage themselves in an irresistible quest for such a family and are able to invent such a family even in a transnational locations. This is how they are able to resist the onslaught of the nation on the one hand and combat the angst of the diaspora on the other. Ghosh’s novels contest the concept of the fixity of familial space and focus on its fluid contours.

The pleasure about reading Amitav's work comes, not only from the story but the description of the lifestyle, behavior of the people, the subtlety of the cultural impact and of course, the details of the day to day life. (Sinha 59)

As a postcolonial novel, his *The Hungry Tide* is not only a narrated tale, but a construct within a wider literary system. Ghosh has made sufficient use of intertextuality recalling and rewriting images and themes from his distinguished predecessor, Salman Rushdie. Amitav Ghosh's greatest gift as a writer may well be his sense of place. A landscape, a city, a village on the edge of a desert it is these images that we summon from his novels when we are distanced from them in memory. Perhaps this is what makes him such a master of the travel narrative, a form whose contours are shaped by places and their histories. *The Hungry Tide*, is set in the Sunderbans, the vast, intermittently submerged archipelago, largely covered by mangrove forests, that form the delta of the Ganges as it debouches into the Bay of Bengal, Two-thirds of the Sunderbans are in Bangladesh, only one-third in India: it is a region whose fishing folk easily traverse the imaginary boundaries of the modern nation-state, crossing, as the wind and the tides take them, the mouth of many river – channels that set up a unique turbulence of fresh and salt water washing the islands of the archipelago.

At the heart of Nirmal's dairy is an historical event: the eviction of refugee settlers from the island of Morichjhapi in the Sunderbans by the Left Front government of West Bengal in 1979. The Tide Country also provided shelter to these refugees who settled there to escape political persecutions. Some went there in 1947 and some in 1971, the years unforgettable in human history for brutal massacre of human beings. They preferred the dangers of the Tide country to the atrocities that were meted out to them in their respective cities, John, C.Hawley suggests that:

Such a setting makes an apt symbol for the ebb and the flow of history and the uprooting of populations, both of which have come to be seen as “Ghosh-ian” themes. Furthermore, just as the natural tides of the area tend to obliterate the sense of permanent division between land and sea, Ghosh’s characters gradually learn to recognize the transient nature of the divisions between individuals – of whatever social class. (Hawley 132)

Refugees who crossed over from East Pakistan in forties and fifties, that they would not consent to a single one being resettled outside West Bengal. The conditions of such resettlement were harsh and alien. In 1978 a group of refugees fled from Dandakaranya camp in Madhya Pradesh and came to the island of Morichjhapi in the Sunderbans with the intention of settling there. Their presence there alarmed the Left Front ministry, who saw it as the first of a possibly endless series of encroachments on protected forest land, and the settlers were evicted in a brutal display of state power in May, 1979. As the last significant expression of the trauma of Bengal’s Partition, the story of Morichjhapi occupies a central place in the novel.

Amitav Ghosh has discovered another new territory, summoning a singular place from its history, language and myth and bringing it to life. Yet the achievement of *The Hungry Tide* is in its exploration of a far darker and more unknowable jungle, the human heart. It is a novel that asks at every turn: what danger resides there, and what delusion? What man can take the true measure of another? *The Hungry Tide* is a whirlwind work of the imagination, every bit as epic in scope and ambition as his beloved and best-selling work, *The Glass Palace*.

Amitav Ghosh embarked his journey as a part of postcolonial writer and rose to world wide recognition with *The Glass Palace*, and epic novel about Indians in Burma and the rise and fall of imperial powers in the twentieth century. Turning on the same leaf he went on to write his most

ambitious novel *Sea Of Poppies* which is the inaugural volume of his planned trilogy. This novel is a vehicle for what Ghosh hopes, will be a completely new way of understanding the origin and dispersal of the Indian diaspora around the world today and role of British empire in that process. The book delineates how present is shaped by imperial India. It is an apt and concrete commentary on how colonialism damaged and divided Indians society. Both the novels *The Glass Palace* and *Sea Of Poppies* have established Ghosh as an archetypal model of post-colonial writing.

Environmental injustice is portrayed at its best in Ghosh's description of the opium factory, particularly the mixing room. The people inside are subject to the most deplorable working condition in the mixing room. Besides being made to toil for hours together without rest, they are subject to the most inhuman treatment. They are hardly treated like human being but a herd of cattle. The opium factory looms like a demon in the lives of the workers and their families and becomes the very symbol of colonial oppression:

The air inside was hot and fetid, like that of a closed kitchen, except that the smell was not of spices and oil, but of liquid opium, mixed with the dull stench of sweat – a reek so powerful that she had to pinch her nose to keep herself from gagging... a host of dark legless torsos was circling around and around, like some enslaved tribes of demons.... when her eyes had grown more accustomed to the gloom, she discovered the secret of those circling torsos: they were bare-bodied men, sunk waist-deep in tanks of opium, tramping round and round to soften the sludge. Their eyes were vacant, glazed and yet somehow they managed to keep moving, as slow as ants in honey, tramping, treading. (SOP 94, 95)

In this novel *Sea Of Poppies*, Ghosh not only focuses on a group of individuals, but a group that is challenging all the established concepts that rule the general idea of the Indian past-including those of colonialism and

nationalism. Ghosh does not directly allow any connection to a larger history or looking back in any anger or any reaction of such nature.

By using well-defined people and their individual concerns-people who are firmly located in the beginning, but follow a gradual process of dislocation -Ghosh brings us to a zone of comfort in which something like identification becomes possible. Perhaps catering to the question of identity and identification, we have here a variety of characters that is truly astounding. We have low caste men, women of questionable social situation, indentured labourers, Indian soldiers, prisoners of different kinds, a white veteran captain, a black officer and so on, mingling together. Here, the foreigner is not the stereotypical white tyrant or abuser, but is another individual coincidentally present within the scope of this novel. Within the layers of foreignness, we find various questions of loyalty and identity questions which are, to a certain extent, vital to the construction of the unknown future that this novel leaves us with.

In this novel, there is a colourful array of seamen, convicts and labourers sailing forth in the hope of transforming their lives. Apparently it seems that the characters are his targets. The Brits whom he depicts are basically scheming, perverse and ruthless to a man, but Ghosh has portrayed them not as round characters who grow. They are largely caricatures.

Amitav Ghosh's writing truly exhibits the manifestation and implications of the term 'Subaltern' in contemporary writings. Ghosh in his works talks about the alternative histories and practices of people. Subaltern is an approach that represent marginalized as they have the inability to speak and empowers them to represent the marginalized people and their issues. Telwani mentioned that almost all his works replete with the experiences of the Subaltern characters. The mosaic of the characters in his works is characterized by the subalternity almost in his all works particularly in *The*

Hungry Tide and *Sea Of Poppies*, he sketches the life of out-caste Dalit refugees from Bangladesh in Sunderban forest, a region of intricate archipelagos replete with hunger and catastrophe.

At the end of *Sea Of Poppies*, the clouds of war were seen looming, as British opium interests in India pressed for the use of force to compel the Chinese mandarins to keep open their ports, in the name of free trade. In *The Glass Palace*, Amitav Ghosh narrates the havoc caused by Japanese invasion in Burma and its effect on the Army officers and people. He creates a sense of dejection that deals with so much human tragedy, wars, deaths, devastation and dislocation. Ghosh penned the story of sacrifice in *The Shadow Lines*, the rescue of May from Muslim mobs in the communal riots of 1963-64 in Dhaka is indeed a great sacrifice.

Amitav Ghosh expressed a developing awareness of the aspirations, defeats and disappointments of the colonized people. In *the Hungry Tide*, Ghosh routes the debate on eco-environment and cultural issues through the intrusion of the West into East. The destruction of traditional village life in *The Circle of Reason* is an allegory about the modernizing influx of western culture and the subsequent displacement of non-European peoples by imperialism.

There is a rich body of fictional work in Indian English fiction regarding the partition of 1947. While partition has been a recurrent motif in Indian English fiction right from 1950s, it is heavily titled on Punjab and Bengal sides. It is primarily, who in his three novels *The Circle Of Reason*, *The Shadow Lines* and *The Hungry Tide*, has dealt in the varying degrees with the aftermath of partition on the Bengal border. These novels highlight the plight of aborigines who are affected by the partition of two countries, their loss of native land and their desperate struggle for survival. They became aliens in their own homeland. Ghosh is the most contemporary

novelist whose novels picturizes the most contemporary issues such as modern man's perennial problems of existential crisis, problems of alienation, problems of restless, rootless and unsettled problems of marginalization.

After studying Ghosh's novels in indepth one can easily imagine that how Indian society is still affected by the aftermath of partition. I would like to highlight the hardships facing by the Kashmiri Hindus who are living as refugees in their own country. It is evident that refugees plight still prevail in Indian society even after celebrating 70th anniversary of India's independence.

Kashmiri Pundits are refugees who have been subjected to genocide and ethnic cleansing but have been ignored by their own country. The Kashmir valley was first inhabited around 2000 BC and its first inhabitants were followers of Shaivite branch of Hinduism. Then Islam arrived in the form of Sultan Sikander (1389-1413 AD), whose penchant for destroying temples and idols earned him the name But-Shikhan (the destroyer of idols). Sikander imposed *Jizya* the religious tax on non-Muslims and mercilessly converted Hindus to Islam.

Maharaja Hari Singh, the Dogra ruler of Kashmir was flirting with the idea of independence. Pakistan sent its troops disguised as tribals into Kashmir. The ferocity of the attack compelled the Maharaja to accede to India on October 26, 1947. The Indian troops managed to drive back the Pakistani forces despite being outnumbered.

Nehru's biggest blunder was incorporating a temporary provision of Article 370 in the constitution of India. All the princely states which acceded to India after independence signed the same instrument of Accession was not given this special facility. Consequently Jammu and Kashmir has a

separate constitution, which no other state in India has. A majority of the laws in the country are therefore not applicable in Jammu and Kashmir. Article 370 has become the single reason why the people of Kashmir could not get integrated into the mainstream of Indian democracy.

The oligarchs have given Article 370 populist appeals by trying it to an autonomous Kashmir identity, while using it as cover to indulge in a massive loot of the natural and financial resources of the state.

Makatabs (religious schools) were established all over Kashmir, ostensibly for teaching Islamic religious scriptures to the youth. In reality, these makatabs indoctrinated the impressionable youth with venomous anti-India agenda. The signs of an anti-India atmosphere were visible from early 1980s. Because of the Hindu religion, Kashmiri Pandits became the symbol of the reviled Indian democracy. Between September 1989 and February 1990, around 2000 Kashmiri Pandits were killed in the valley. Thousands were maimed for life and their property was seized. Mosques utilized loudspeakers to threaten the Kashmiri Pandits to leave their homes or face death. With the police unwilling to save them, the Kashmiri Hindus became a victim of pusillanimity exhibited by the Indian political system. The pundits were mutilated, shot and their bodies not permitted to be cremated. Women were Kidnapped and raped. The judiciary refused to pass sentences against terrorists and the police was too intimidated to take on them. *The Daily Alsafa* published an ultimatum on April 14, 1990, giving the Pundits two days to leave the valley or face retribution and death. It was ethnic cleansing and genocide that went unnoticed in India, leave aside the rest of the world.

The migration of the Kashmiri pundits is unmatched in the annals of History. It is one of the greatest human tragedies since partition, a lost community and perhaps at one level a lost generation. Twenty five odd years after the great exodus from the valley where they left their homes and

hearths, many Kashmiri Pandits have picked up the pieces and gone back to living their lives. This is the travesty of a pundit, who cannot live in their homeland, but living in his own country as a refugee. They live as second rate citizen in their own country. There is no quota for them, there is no freebie given, there is nothing that makes an allowance for their unique predicament. Survival is essential and since nature abhors a vacuum, life has to go on.

It is said that after 1971 thousands of Hindus and other persons of minority communities from Bangladesh has migrated to India to escape from religious persecutions, are living in 18 states of India as refugees are struggling to get a citizenship from Indian Government.

The issue of refugees continues to plague the world with a reality that it prefers to ignore. But the world will either have to face it or opt to continue ignoring it at the risk of having to deal with graver consequences sooner or later. The plight of refugees is a global issue. Here by I would like to discuss briefly one more similar issue prevailing at present in Myanmar – its Rohingya refugees and their plight for survival.

Myanmar, also known as Burma, is home to a large Rohingya population particularly in Rakhine state, in the West of the country. The Rohingya are a Muslim ethnic minority group living on Myanmar's Western Rakhine state, bordering Bangladesh on the Bays of Bengal. Myanmar views its population of around 1.1 million Rohingya as illegal, Bangladeshi immigrants and denies them citizenship. They face a slew of restrictions that have led the United Nations to consider them one of the world's most persecuted people.

Two waves of violence in 2012 between Rohingya and majority Buddhists in Rakhine State sparked religious unrest across the country,

leaving more than 200 people dead and around 140,000 homeless. (The Rohingya) are not allowed to register their marriage, they are not allowed to have education and worst of all, the Burmese authorities have encouraged communal violence against the Rohingya Muslims. The survivors of communal unrest are forced to live in ghetto – like facilities and are unable to return to their homes that were seized by the Buddhist neighbours.

HRW research in 2013 concluded that the atrocities committed against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state is a crime against humanity and bordering on ethnic cleansing.

Since 2012, thousands of Rohingya have fled Myanmar on boats to southern Thailand and beyond in the hope of reaching mainly Muslim Malaysia.

Thousands of Rohingya people and other migrants continue to be smuggled through Thailand and from other countries in the region by human traffickers, in some cases including corrupt local Thai authorities.

The agonies of these refugees who are moving away from motherland for their survival makes me to think of a Sanskrit proverb which is very apt in this situation is that “Mother and mother land are of greater importance than the heaven”. The people admit that the heaven is the happiest place but infact the mother and mother-land bestow greater happiness than the heaven.

Amitav Ghosh realizes that the gist of human life is that after looking so much here and there man only wants to relax, to come home to take rest. Ghosh’s fictions are characterized by strong themes that may be some what identified with post colonialism but could be labeled as historical novels. His topics are unique and personal: some of his appeal lies in his ability to weave “Indo-nostalgic” elements into more serious themes. As a social

anthropologist, Ghosh made a good research on the evolution of human society in the face of adversities and natural calamities. This is how the plight, crisis and the heart rending story of the subalterns or the marginal is projected into the centre of narrative attention by Ghosh in most of his novels.

In a conversation with Lila Azam Zanganesh, she asks a question to Ghosh that “I know one of the thing that come up constantly in your books is a question of ‘who are we’?”

Ghosh said:

People often talk about identity. It's not one of the things which really is washing about in my head at all. One of the reasons why is because anybody who's lived in India knows that India is incredibly, incredibly diverse. I mean it would be almost impossible to define what it means to be, moreover to say that everyone who identifies themselves as Indians is what they are. That's one of the wonderfully liberating things about India; it lets you be exactly who you want to be. And in many, many different ways. At the same time it also offers you these incredible civilizational resources. Myths and poetry and
(Jha 275)

Ghosh has been described as an ‘elder statesman’ among Indian writers in English. His work has received wide critical acclaim: winning several prizes and major nominations. Ghosh's first novel, *The Circle of Reason* won one of France's top literary award: the Prix Medicis Estrangiere in 1990. Also in 1990, Ghosh received the Annual Award of the Sahitya Akademy for his novel *The Shadow Lines*. Later that year, he received the Ananda Purashkar in Calcutta for the same novel. Ghosh's essays *The Ghost of Mrs. Gandhi* was published in Best American Essays in 1995; in 1996 his scientific novel *The Calcutta Chromosome* won the Arthur C. Clark Award. Ghosh also received the Pushcart Prize in 1999 for his essay “The March of the Novel through History: The Testimony of my Grandfather's Book Case”

his essay “Countdown” was a finalist for the American Society of Magazine Editors’ Award in 1999. His book *The Glass Palace* became an international bestseller that sold more than a half million copies in Britain alone. The Book won the \$50000 International e-Book Award at the Frankfurt Book Fair. *The Hungry Tide* won the Hutch Cross word Book Award for the best novel of the year. *Incendiary Circumstances* won the Asian-American Literary Award for non-fiction. *Sea Of Poppies*, the first volume of an intended trilogy was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. The book received the cross word Book Award and the India plaza Golden Quill Award for the best novel.

Amitav Ghosh’s fiction and non-fiction are teemed with homogeneous amalgamation of blend of variegated cultures, traditions and languages and the major thematic preoccupations of his writings are based upon impressive themes of travel, opium war, migration, historical facts, communal cruelty, political turmoil, corruption, caste politics, love, loss, travellers, diaspora, exiles, struggle and strife. The epic like *Ibis* trilogy of which two-thirds of journey have already been explored with a great deal of fanfare, exuberance and achievement, remains so far the most ambitious and go getting project of his life.

It would be appropriate to conclude by stating that the novel is a blend of issues related to the people who thrive on the margins. By voicing several issues through the marginalized, Ghosh bestows agency to be silenced, an opportunity to highlight the forgotten, neglected stories.

Future scope for further study

The process of migration has been so widespread in man’s historical experience that there is hardly anybody in the world who would know where his forefathers lived a thousand years ago. “There is no greater sorrow on

earth than the loss of one's native land", says Euripides. The word refugee is evocative, even powerful. South Asia is a region that constitutes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka has witnessed massive inter-state migrations and refugee movements as no other region of the world has. There are refugees fleeing hunger, run for their lives or for their freedom from their own governments, from natural disaster or from man's inhumanity to man. Historically, South Asia has witnessed substantial intra-regional movement and dislocation of regional groups fleeing ethnic or religious persecution and political instability. The empirical experience of the region shows countries can be both refugee generating and refugee hosting. India, Bangladesh and Nepal are countries that receive refugees, while Bhutan and Sri Lanka have generated refugees.

The exodus of millions of East Pakistani Bengali refugees to India during the Bangladesh crisis of 1970-71 falls into this category. The creation of Pakistan in 1947 on religious lines could not address the problem of nation-building beyond the Islamic labeling. The military rulers of Myanmar took away the citizenship rights of the Rohingyas on the ground that they were economic refugees who had migrated to their country during the British rule. A policy of State repression followed.

Almost all South Asian conflicts have ethnic connections. But the most prominent of all is the Sinhala-Tamil ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka because unlike in other cases the Tamil demand for a separate state has been the most strident. The first flow of Sri Lanka Tamil refugees to India in the eighties was directly linked to this conflict.

22 May 2015 *The Hindu* newspaper reports that half of Syria is now under Islamic control. Islamic state controls over half of Syria's landmass after its seizure of Palmyra, where it has begun massacring a rebellious tribe and faces no opposition to its entry and sacking of the historic city's ancient

ruins. IS had imposed a curfew and was sweeping the city for remnants of Assad's forces. The group has also massacred members of the shaitat tribe, which had railed against it in Desir Ezzor, a rebellion in which the militant group killed 800 members of the tribe.

More than 20,000 migrants, many of them refugees from the Syrian War, have trekked into Croatia, when Hungary used a metal fence, tear gas and water cannons on its southern border with Serbia to bar their route into the European Union. The European Union's newest member state said it may try to stop taking in refugees, just as the 28 nation bloc announced its leaders would hold an emergency summit on September 23 to try to resolve the migration crisis, which has deeply divided it.

More than 7,300 people entered Croatia from Serbia in 24 hours after clashes between Hungarian riot police and stone-throwing refugees at its Balkan neighbour's frontier. The EU is split over how to cope with the influx of people mostly fleeing war and poverty in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Almost all the works of Amitav Ghosh reflected the theme of borders, boundaries, forced migration and refugee's plight. His *The Circle of Reason* combines within itself an uncompromising restlessness with a poise and control, which suggests peace rather than longing. This is remarkable, for really the book offers nothing which it can call home. It is located in a refugee village; the story refers back to Bangladesh and Calcutta, finally moving to the Middle East via Kerala where it reaches its denouement in a desert of shifting sand-dunes.

In *The Shadow Lines* Ghosh has raised a question that whether the partition is a solution to the problems of social unrest whether on religious grounds or political motivation. The partition creates the feeling of humiliation and agony for the dear and near ones who are compelled to

migrate from their homeland merely for the reasons based on whims of political solution of the problem faced by the nation.

In his novel *The Glass Palace*, he sketches motley of migrant characters, who experience forced and voluntary migration. Forced migration becomes the foundation for their migration and displacement, while voluntary migration becomes the basis of their relocation for migrant characters from home country. His migrant characters are displaced from their land and are forced to migrate to another land, either through the influence of 'push' factor in the form of an involuntary migration or a 'pull' factor that draws them to migrate to another land voluntarily. Ghosh sketches response of the migrant, who are on the verge of arrival at the new land.

The Hungry Tide depicts the entire history of refugees, their movement from Bangladesh, their settlement in Dandakarnya in Central India, the ill-treatment of them by the local people and government, their urge for the muddy and tidy country, their arrival to Morichjhapi, their effort to restructure their lives, confrontations with the Government and the massacre of the refugees are all narrated through the diary left behind by the character Nirmal, in the novel.

In his book *Sea Of Poppies* Ghosh draws attention to the historical consequences of imperialism leading to migration and displacement of the people. By using the tools of deconstruction, the characters try to escape their names, caste, race, places of origin while constructing identity. Cut off from the older personal, familial and national ties these migrants forge new identity and adopt the *Ibis* as new cultural community.

The greatest impact of migration is the historical events that culminate in migration. Colonialism, Communal riots, partition of India,

Iran-Iraq War, British invasion of Burma and World War II are few historical events that feature in the novels of Amitav Ghosh. These events exemplify serious repercussions on peoples' lives. His characters are made to go through immense transitions in their lives with the intrusion of historical events and these transitions are either forced or deliberate.

Forced migration in South Asia is a growing phenomenon emerging from political reasons, economic expediency and environmental degradation. In India and other parts of the world like Syria, Myanmar etc. religion is one of the main cause for partition and eviction of people from their homeland to other places which paves the ways for refugees in and around the globe. Even now no nation is able to find a proper and amicable solution for this refugee crisis. If people think 'good behaviour is the best religion', to a great extent, refugees crisis could be avoided so that no nation or leaders (try to) generate refugees.

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