



Research Paper

The Teller & The Tales: A Study of The Novels of Amitav Ghosh

*Nilanjan Bala

State Council of Educational Research & Training, Department of School Education,
Government of West Bengal & Ph.D research scholar, Mewar University
Corresponding author: *Nilanjan Bala

Received 29 July, 2017; Accepted 31 July, 2017 © The author(s) 2017. Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

ABSTRACT: The paper re-visits the plot and setting of the novels of Amitav Ghosh. The paper has two parts – (i) *The Teller* & (ii) *The Tales*. In the first section the text tries to give a brief sketch of the life of Amitav Ghosh to chronicle the life of the visionary commentator of life and the social anthropologist, the most prominent among the Indian writers of English. In the second part the theme and storyline of the novels were revisited along with characters and narrative technique. The first section has been introduced to give an overview of the prolificness of the author and the second part is the testimony of his logocentricism. The paper aims to present the plot and theme of all Ghosh's novels.

Keywords: Novels of Amitav Ghosh, Plot, Theme, Setting, Storyline, Characters, Narrative technique

I. INTRODUCTION

“Novelists inevitably mine their own experiences when they write.”

- Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement*, Page.20

Amitav Ghosh, the social anthropologist, novelist, essayist, travel writer, columnist and activist is the prominent among the Indian Writers of English writing about diaspora and contemporary issues as latest as climate change. His novels poignantly express the experience and world view of the diaspora, the immigrant. His novels convey the “*sense of place*” and at the same time “*the very loss of lived sense of place*”, the dislocations which is the element of fictionalization in his novels. But there is a point of uniqueness which places Ghosh on a separate strand from the contemporaries writing about wandering and longing for home. The point is fictionalizing the history or the subversion of historical elements. His two most favourite subjects are – imperialism and colonial hegemony. These two brings with them others and crowded the space of the novels-multiculturalism, discrimination and inequality, crisis of identity and even ‘deterritorialization’ of culture and the narratives became narration of nations.

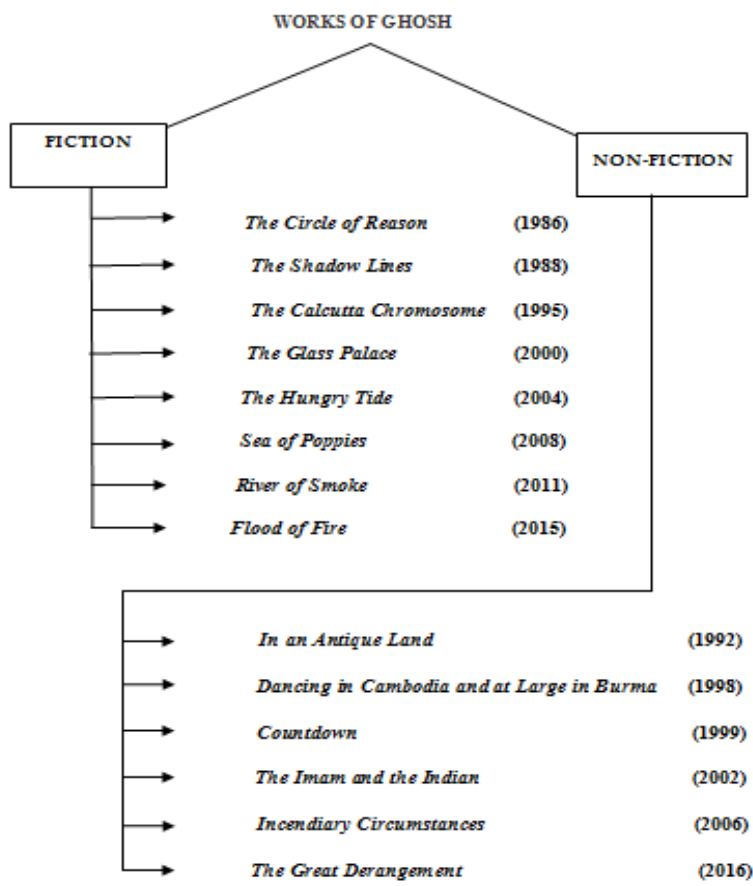
The first section, “*The Teller*” is briefly describes the life of the author and from this life the protagonists may have learn to travel so extensively and so far away of places. Every novel moves around a historical fact which is definitely has bearing with his reading in History. Therefore, the first section briefly hovers around this illustrious life which “*always dreamt of becoming a writer*” (Ghanshyam, G.A et. All, “Amitav Ghosh: A Traveler Across Time and Space”, p.43). The second section, “*The Tales*”, is a study of the novels and writings churned out of twenty years of pursuit of words with the thematic perspective in point of view. The themes were discussed in detail in view of the expectation that this may contribute to further researches on the notions of Ghosh on novels and its employment of various apparatuses.

II. THE TELLER

Amitav Ghosh, “*a writer of formidable learning and intelligence*” as mentioned by “The Indian Express” was born in Calcutta on 11 July 1956 to Lieutenant Colonel Shailendra Chandra Ghosh, a retired officer of the pre-independence Indian Army. He spent his formative years at the Doon School, and received his bachelors from Delhi University in 1976 in the “Emergency Period” as quoted in “*Countdown*”. He holds a Ph.D from Oxford University in social anthropology. He started his career with the **Indian Express** newspaper in New Delhi and reminiscence poignantly in the “*Countdown*” (**Pg.14**) of his initial years of on the job experience. He has been a fellow at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta and Centre for Development Studies in Trivandrum. In 1999, Amitav Ghosh joined the faculty at Queens College, City University of New York, as Distinguished Professor in Comparative literature. He has also been a visiting Professor at the English department of Harvard University since 2005.

Amitav Ghosh has received several awards and recognition for his excellent contribution in the domain of literature and writing. Some of the awards he has won are *Prix Medicis Etranger*, France's top literary award, for the book '**The Circle of Reason**', the *Sahitya Akademi Award* and the *Ananda Puraskar* for '**The Shadow Lines**', *Arthur C. Clarke Award* for '**The Calcutta Chromosome**', *Frankfurt International e-Book Award* for '**The Glass Palace**' and *Crossword Book Prize* for '**The Hungry Tide**'.

Apart from these, he has also received other noted distinctions like Grinzane Cavour Award in Italy and the Padma Shri by the Indian government in 2007. His book 'Sea of Poppies' received the Crossword Book Award in 2009 and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. A table delineating his works of fiction and non-fiction delineated below-



III. THE TALES

The Circle Of Reason

The Circle of Reason (1986) moves from *Satwa* to *Rasjas* to *Tamas* and these are the three parts of the novel. The novel narrates three stories. The first part deals with the story of Balam Bose and his wife Torudevi who lives in Lalpukur, a nondescript village in West Bengal near Indo-Bangladesh border. Balam Bose is a rationalist, and an admirer and follower of Louis Pasteur, the French microbiologist. His ideals and whims and avid following of reason and cynicism lead to his destruction and demise. His wife has fetish for sewing and sewing machines which borders at times near madness.

Alu, the name given by Bolaida, the cycle-repair shop owner of Lalpukur, the protagonist, nee Nachiketa Bose is the nephew of Balam Bose and has come to stay with his uncle and aunt after losing his parents in a car accident. He is the only one to survive in the family at Lalpukur but came under the scanner of the State and followed by Jyoti Das, a Police Officer from Lalpukur to Kerala. He lost his love interest Maya Debnath, daughter of his weaving teacher Shombhu Debnath in the police raid insinuated by Bhudeb Roy. The next part of the novel delineates the tale of Zindi at-Tiffaha trying to bring together the community of Indians in the oil-rich state of Al-Ghazira from Kerala through the Arabian Sea. After a bizarre accident in which Alu survived due to two sewing machines “ of the old kind, of black solidsteel” , “ otherwise wolud have been flattene” and lying there he had a dream of his Uncle. This dream lead to a social experiment in al-Ghazira until the local Government ends it with brute force.

This forced Alu, Zindi, Kulfi and Boss to wander from Al-Ghazira through Alexandria, Egypt, Lisbon, Tunis to a little town of El Oued and are still pursued by the Indian Policeman. The third part is the story of Dr. Uma Verma daughter of Hem Narain Mathur, the rationalist friend of Balaram Bose, a microbiologist, who rejects rational thinking of Dr. Mishra, son of Shri Murlil Charan Mishra.

The short, pleasantly plump, honey-complexioned woman in her thirties, Dr. Uma Verma is searching for the heroine of “Chandalika” to showcase Indian cultural life in the desert of Algeria and is the new empowered and emancipated woman and found Kulfi to act as the heroine against the Hero Jyoti Das, the Arjun of Mahabharata. Strangely, the hunt and the hunter came tangled in one net. At the end of the novel we find them in search of new horizons, hopes which are not fully formed and imaginations yet to be fulfilled off to Tangiers and to Dusseldorf. The novel is traced to picaresque genre by some critics as the novel explores the adventures of Alu, the Nachiketa Bose and like his mythological namesake went to death’s home and taught by death the recognition of self.

The novel can be read with “In An Antique Land” and many characters crop from there as well as many a stories, like Zaghoul or the egg collection story of Nury the Cross-Eyed Damahouri. “In An Antique Land” was written from his notes out of his doctoral anthropological and ethnological research at Nile Delta. The experience proved rich for when he set the town Al-Ghazira for the sake of the novel.

IV. THE SHADOW LINES

The Shadow Lines (1988) captures perspective of time and events and the story gyrates out of an intricate, constantly crisscrossing web of memories of many people. The story revolves around two parts – “*Going Away*” & “*Coming Home*”. The novel was set in 1939 with a journey (*wandering*) to England by Mayadebi (Maya-thakuma) with her husband and her son Tridib. Mayadebi was the narrator’s “*father’s aunt*” and “*grandmother’s only sister*”.

The novel starts in 1890 and ends in 1979 and explores the families of Datta Chaudharis - and the Price family in London triggered by the friendship between Mr. Justice Chandrasekhar Datta-Chaudhuri, Tridib’s grandfather, a judge in Calcutta High Court and Lionel Tresawson. The novel is built around Tridib who was working on a Ph.D in Archaeology and Thamma, narrator’s grandmother, an widow School Headmistress initially and then moves to Ila and May Price. Tridib’s mother Mayadevi and narrator’s grandmother were sisters. Mayadevi was married to Shri Himangshushekar Datta-Chaudhuri, an officer in the Indian Foreign Service. Mayadevi and Himangshu have three sons – Jatin, Tridib & Robi. Jatin is an economist with the UN. Ila is the daughter of Jatin and closest cousin of the narrator. The novel unfurls itself with the historical events of the Naxal movement, Swadeshi movement, Second World War, Partition of India and Communal riots of 1963-64 in Dhaka and Calcutta. The novel embodies elements of the bildungsroman tradition of the novel because novel explores the development of the unnamed narrator’s, whose father was junior executive in a company which dealt in vulcanised rubber and mother was a homemaker, mind and character, as he matures from childhood through experiences into maturity and came to terms with his identity.

V. THE CALCUTTA CHROMOSOME

The Calcutta Chromosome (1995) is divided into two parts, (i) *August, 20: Mosquito Day* and (ii) *The Day After*. The novel centres around the discovery of the life cycle of malaria mosquito and how it causes the disease to human beings by Ronald Ross on 20th August 1897. The protagonist of the novel is Antar. He had studied linear programming from Patrice Lumumba University, Moscow and worked as Programme Analyst at Life watch, a NGO. Presently he works from home as his previous employer have been taken over by the International Water Council and is due to retire in one year. Antar lives in New York in an apartment with migrants –Kurds, Afgans, Tajiks, Egyptians, and from Russia, Ajerbaijan and Armenia. He is also a migrant from Egypt, from the western edge of the Nile Delta, around Alexandria. His wife Tayseer was from Bab Zuwayla in Cairo and died in the 35th week of her pregnancy due to amniotic embolism. He was monitoring his super computer, Ava’s boring shuffling of inventory and was thinking of going to the doughnut shop in Penn Station owned by an Egyptian and planning his dinner with Tara, his neighbour later. Tara had been introduced to him by Maria, the Guyanese woman, one of the three regulars of Penn Station doughnut shop and she was brought into USA by a Kuwaiti Diplomat. Suddenly a charred ID card of Life Watch flung him into activities of finding the identity of the card holder and the novel starts unfurling and he was re-membering his association with the eccentric colleague L.Murugan. He was a Life Watch employee missing since August 21,1995 last seen in Calcutta. Morgan as he is called in the west had a global childhood from a technocrat father and his life centred on the medical history of malaria and the research career of Sir Ronald Ross, whom he fondly calls Ronnie. He reached Calcutta on August 20, 1995 on a cooked up small research project where he had spent his school days and affected with syphilis from Free School Street. He hires the “Robinson Guest House” of Mrs. Aratounian from an Armenian family, the owner of Dutton Nursery. In Calcutta Murugan after hounded by “the boy” who was wearing a discoloured T-shirt with a print of a palm-figured sea and the words “Pattaya Beach”,

took shelter in an auditorium. In the auditorium there was celebration going on to commemorate the eighty-fifth birthday of the writer Phulboni, pen name of Saiyad Murad Hussain and there he met with two journalists, Sonali Das, tall elegant older one, once an actress in Bombay whose mother was also an actress of the stage, Kamini Devi and with Urmila Roy, the younger journalist. They both are working in the magazine called "Calcutta". Phulboni was also the father of Sonali Das who has a live in relationship with Romen Halder a wealthy builder and contractor. And in this backdrop there was Lutchman and Mangala of the Indian "Counter Science group" who were directing the course of malarial research. In 1995, colonial 'other' Mangala has become a deity to the subalterns of the Calcutta.

The novel has a layered narrative and transformations. The first layer of narrative is of Antar and Ava and Murugan. The second layer of narrative is of colonial story of malarial research history. The third layer concerns Mangala and her disciple Lakkhan and their metaphysical powers. The novel is also of transformations. Lakkhan became the boy, who works in Sonali Das's home, who hounds Murugan and who sold fish to Urmila wrapped in of The Colonial Services Gazette from January 1898. Phulboni transformed to the worshipper of silence after the Renapur incident where a train becomes a killing machine. Sonali transformed to Maria and Urmila to Tara and Mrs. Aratounian to Mangala.

The narrative employs stream of consciousness technique and spans about 150 years of annals. The protagonists roam the streets of America, Egypt, England and different parts of India – from south to east. Ghosh wrote in the "Acknowledgements" of *The Imam And the Indian*, "***I finished the translation (of Kshuditha Pashan of Rabindranah Tagore) shortly before I began writing The Calcutta Chromosome and it was to have a profound influence on that novel, as well as its successor, The Glass Palace***" (P. xiv).

VI. THE GLASS PALACE

The Glass Palace (2000) is a historical novel which starts in the November, 1885 and ends in 1996 and set against the backdrop of third Anglo-Burmese war and fall of Konabaung dynasty in Mandalay, Second World War, raising of Indian National Army, 'forgotten Long March of 1941' and exodus from Burma to present day Burma, oppression by the Burmese Junta, political movements of Aung San Suu Kyi and her gate meetings. The novel, "unqualifiedly" one, has seven parts – *Mandalay, Ratnagiri, The Money Tree, Morningside, The Front* and *The Glass Palace*. The novel spins around four families- Burmese Royal family, Rajkumar Raha's family, John Martins family and Uma Dey's family. The main protagonist of the novel is Rajkumar Raha, an Indian orphan who came to Burma by accident and rose to prominence.

The first part deals with the British occupation of Burma and unceremonious extradition of Burmese royal family to the west coast of India. The first part also plants the seed of kinship between the assistant of Ma Cho, Rajkumar and Sayagi of Ma Cho, John Martins, respectfully called Saya John, a Chinese from Singapore brought up in Malacca. In this part, Rajkumar met Dolly first met at the time of looting of the Glass Palace and second time and pressed a banana leaf packet into her hand. The second to fifth part deals with the coming to age of Rajkumar both financially as well as in personal life in Burma and of Dolly in Ratnagiri under supervision of the Colonial power and of the deceased collector's wife Uma Dey. The third part of the novel explores the second generation these families. Rajkumar and Dolly had two sons – Sein Win aka Neeladhri Raha- Neel for short and Tun Pe aka Dinanath Raha- Dinu for short. Saya John's son Matthew and his American wife Elsa Hoffman and settled in Malaya and they have a daughter Alison. The name of the chapter derives from the name of the rubber plantation at Gunung Jerai and Elsa named it. After Alison, they had a boy named Timmy. This plantation is also bears Rajkumar his illegitimate child, Ilongo and later the illegitimate legitimised the whole plantation. The family of Uma Dey consist of two nieces – Manju and Bela and one nephew, Arjun. Manju got married to Neel and Arjun had a brief escapade with Alison but she professed her love for Dinu. "The Front", the part six depicts the Second World War and its impact on the lives of the characters and the rise of identity and ends with the suicide of Manju in the exodus march from Burma of 1941. The last part deals with the post-war trauma on the lives of the characters, the independence of India to the rule of military junta in Burma. This part is the story of Jaya, the survivor daughter of Manju and Neel, of Dolly who joined the nunnery at Sagging, of Dolly's search for Dinu and carefully repeated by Jaya's search for Dinu in 1996. In fact Jaya went on a flashback tour of the whole annals of her multiethnic roots. She wandered and the novel came home with the story told to Jaya by her son. The novel ends with an embrace of union, of kinship, of life, of companionship. The narrator of the story is Jaya's son, the fourth generation of the Indo-Burmese descent, the story of well travelled orphan matured through Colonial rule, torn by a War, the story of families and nations, of located-ness in times of dislocation and wandering. The novel is to be read with "Dancing in Cambodia and Other Essays" and the traces of his extensive travel and meetings is clearly in sight.

VII. THE HUNGRY TIDE

The Hungry Tide (2004) is a novel of adventure, of interactions between physical and human environment and takes place in the Sunderbans, the delta on bay of Bengal formed by the confluence of Ganges,

Meghna, Padma & Brhamaputra, The mangrove forest played the primordial and principal protagonist in the novel as did “Egdon Heath” in **The Return of the Native** by Thomas Hardy.

The novel has two parts: - *the Ebb* and *the Flood*, the “Bhata” and the “Jowar”. The novel is principally set in Lusibari And Gorjontola which are but fictitious. The story revolves around three lives – of Piyali Roy everyone calls Piya, the Indo-American cetologist who came to India to study Orcaella brevirostris or the river dolphins, of Kanai Dutta, nephew of Nirmal Bose and Nilima Bose, founder of Badabon Trust, a businessman from Delhi, of Fokir, son of Kusum, husband of Moyna and father of Tutul, the local fisherman and whom Piya engaged as guide for her project. Fokir dies in Gorjontolla when the boat carrying him and Piya went there in search of the dolphins as their boat was caught in the storm but by giving his life he saved Piya’s. Although he being an illiterate and she being a diaspora Indian who does not know Bengali save the dialect could communicate transgressing distance but bond makes them cling.

There are four slices of narrative bundled in one like an optical fiber. The optical fiber has four parts – the core, the cladding, the coating, the strength member and the outer jacket. The ‘*core*’ of the narrative is “Sundarbans”- a setting of legends, folklore, myths, stories, of a stage where humans fight against nature to ‘eke a living from the mud’. The ‘*cladding*’ part consists of the dream of settlement of Daniel Hamilton to fulfill the Utopian dream and the ‘*coating*’ narrative is of Morichjhapi incident consist of lower caste Hindus from East Bengal and their brutal oppression by the State under the guise of conservation, ‘*the strength member*’ narrative is of Piya and Fokir, the ‘*outer jacket*’ narrative is of Piya and Kanai which intentionally remains unfinished.

VIII. SEA OF POPPIES

The **Sea of Poppies (2008)** is a tale of love, of violations and visions, of dreams, of oppression, of the fight of the subaltern, of the outcastes and also of deceit, of conspiracy, of adventure, of transformations - physical, social and emotional. The novel is set against the backdrop of “Opium Trade” with China and the business of transporting human cargos. The novel has three parts- *Land, River & Sea*. This is the first part of the “*Ibis*” trilogy.

“Ibis” is also the schooner with the yacht-like rigging “with her sails aligned along her length rather than across the line of her hull”, evoked the image of “long, like a stork or a heron” – “white-winged bird in flight” built in Baltimore to serve as a ‘black birder’- transporting slaves. Benjamin Brightwell Burnham of “Burnham Bros.” although had purchased the ship with the intention for opium trade but for the blockade in China transporting girmitiyas (indentured labourers) and prisoners who are sentenced with *Kaala Pani* from India to Mauritius. Zachary Reid, the twenty year old carpenter, mulatto son of a Maryland freedwoman who was working in the Gardiner shipyard at Fell’s point in Baltimore from the age of twelve commandeered “Ibis” to Calcutta and reached Calcutta 11 months after leaving Baltimore with the help of the lascar company that was engaged at cape Town and headed by Serang Ali, a Rohingya muslim from Arakan. He was appointed as the Second mate of “Ibis” in his journey to Mareech.

There were also two prisoners on board of “Ibis”. One is Raja Neel Rattan Halder, son of Late Raja Ram Rattan Halder of Raskhali witnessed the approaching of “Ibis” when the Raja was returning after his visit from Raskhali estate accompanied by his concubine, Elokeshi and his eight year old son Raj Rattan from his wife Rani Malati. He was arrested by Major Hall, the Commissioner of Police and was taken to Lalbazar on the charges of forgery brought upon by Benjamin Brightwell Burnham, the owner of “Ibis”. On 20th July, 1838, the Raja was sentenced for transportation to Mauriios for seven years and the court seized his properties to repay the debts. He was to be transported with another fellow inmate of Alipore jail, an Indo-Chinese, named Lei Leong Fatt aka Mr. Framjee Pestonjee Moddie, love child of Lei Chei Mei, a Chinese boat women and Baharamji Nauroji Moddie, an Indian trader. They were also on board of “Ibis”. The Chinese was called “ Afat” or “ Ah Fatt’ by the jail inmates.

The novel is set in northern Bihar, four hundred miles from the coasts and three miles from Gazipur and some fifty miles east of Benares. The novel begins with a dream, a vision of an immense ship with two tall masts with great sails of dazzling shade of white of Aditi nee Deeti. She the upper caste Rajput peasant women, and “despite the careworn commonplaceness” stood out for her eyes- “ light grey eyes” as if at the same time blind and all seeing. The dream was sometime in the second week of March, 1838. She is the sister of Sepoy Kesri Singh, and wife of disabled Sepoy in British regiment, Hukam Singh who now works in the Sudder Opium factory in Gazipur. She is also the mother of Kabutari, her six year old daughter and thus also known as “ *Kabutari-Ki-ma*”. She also too quickly became the “Bhauji” to the girmitiyas travelling to Mareech or Mauritius by the “*Ibis*”. Both her names, Aditi & Deeti, has deep mythological reference in Vedic mythology Aditi is the mother of the gods, of all creations and is unbound and unfettered but in Puranas, Deeti is the opponent of Aditi, mother of the demons and the bound one. She represents this binary throughout the novel. Deeti had been violated in her wedding night by Subedar Bhyro Singh, uncle of her husband Hukam Singh. The Subedar in his mid fifties with luxuriant white moustache had already retired from army but employed with

“Burnham Bros.” in the business of transportation of human cargos. Kabutari her six year old daughter had been born out of this violation. The Subedar was killed by Kalua on the deck of “Ibis”.

Kalua, the oxcart driver, “a giant of a man” use to drive Hukam Singh to the opium factory and he hails from a leather worker’s caste-chamars, the untouchables. When Deeti gave him a lump of afeem to bring her husband from factory where he had become ill, Kalua broke the lump into two and fed the halves to his oxen and took Kabutari and kabutari-ki-ma to Gazipur in return to bring the ailing father. He was registered as Maddow Colver in the girmitiya register by James Doughty as insisted by Baboo Nobokrishna Panda, the gomusta of Burnham Bros. Kalua, the giant had been rewarded with that ox cart for winning several wrestling matches for the three Thakur brothers of Gazipur. But the giant tasted defeat on the grand square in front of the Ramgarh Palace in the hands of the wrestling champion of the court of Maharaja of Benares. After his defeat, the thakurs tethered Kalua to the poppy field to mate with a large black mare as suggested by Heerabai, the prostitute in Benares. The thakurs violated the dignity of the man, humiliated and ultimately Kalua was left unconscious and smeared with the dung of the mare in the field. He was nursed by Deeti and she cleansed him.

After the death of ailing Hukam Singh, his younger brother Chandan Singh, the lecherous and slack jawed youth with a “brood of five children” wanted Deeti to be a Sati to go on pyre with her dead husband but Kalua saved her took her on a raft on the Ganges and they fled and got married – a rebirth like the tale of Behula and Lakhindar where the woman placed body of her dead husband and gave him a rebirth. Here the rebirth is of the two violated and the oppressed. On the same day when Deeti had her vision of the “Ibis” and when “Ibis” anchored at Ganga Sagar, five hundred miles to the east of Gazipur and some fifteen miles from Calcutta in the village of Naskarpara on the edge of the Sunderbans, Azad Naskar, Jodu as popularly called, buried his mother and set sail for Calcutta with the ambition to join an ocean bound ship as lascar. His mother was the wet nurse to Paulette Lambert, the daughter of the deceased assistant curator of Calcutta Botanical gardens, Pierre Lambert. Jodu and Paulette Lambert were reared as siblings and Paulette was nicknamed Putli and when she was on board of “Ibis” identified as Pugli. With the help of Mr. Reid and on the request of Paulette Lambert, Jodu was engaged with “Ibis” as lascar. The novel ends with the escape of Serang Ali, Jodu, Neel and Ah Fatt from “Ibis” on that rainy and stormy night when the first mate Mr. Crowle was murdered by Ah Fatt with the long boat of “Ibis”. The escape was watched by Zachary, Paulette, Baboo Nob Kissin and Deeti.

IX. RIVER OF SMOKE

The River of Smoke (2011) is the second part of the “Ibis” trilogy. The novel has three parts – *Islands, Canton and Commissioner L*. The novel begins with Deeti’s shrine in Mauritius and the description of the Puja and related feast. The shrine is of marut, god of wind and the god is also the father of Hanuman. The outer part of the shrine is called ‘Deetiji-ka-smriti-mandir’. Here Deeti painted her memories along with contributions from Raja Neel Rattan Halder and Paulette Lambert. Deeti had accrued the skill of painting from her grandmother who hailed from Madhubani of Bihar. The place of this shrine was accidentally discovered by Girin, the son of Kalua & Deeti.

The novel is about the escape from the Ibis and about three ships- *Anahita, Redruth* and *Ibis*. The novel delineates the wandering of the escapees and their escapades in the Great Nicobar Island. In this island escapees joined the party of an “Omjah Karruh”- village headman of the tribes of the island and collected nests of Hinlene which had immense value in China. In return they earned their onward passage and Kalua and Jodu went with Serang Ali to Mergui on an indigenous Malay boat and Neel and Ah fat travelled to Singapore on a Bugistrading ship. *Anahita* is the opium carrier of Seth Bahramji Naurozi Modi and was built in Bombay. He was the father of Ah Fat. It was also caught in the storm which caught “Ibis” and the storm caused damage to the cargo, ripped off the whole head of the ship including the sculptured figurehead of Anahita and the elder Munshiji of the farm was dead. The paiting of this ship and Seth Bahramji Naurozi Modi were the contribution of Neel in the ‘Deetiji-ka-smriti-mandir’. Neel took the job of Munshiji to the Sethji and was settled in “Achha Hong” in canton.

Redruth was the ship of Frederick Fitcher Penrose, the nursery man and plant-hunter and owner of “Penrose & Sons” based in Falmouth, Cornwall, Britain. Redruth sailed into Port Louis two days after Ibis anchored there. The ship sailed there for Fitcher’s visit to the Botanical Gardens at Pamplemouses, an hour’s ride from Port Louis. Fitcher visited the garden and found it in utter dilapidation but his intention of collection of some plants bumped him onto Paulette who took shelter there. Paulette was taken into the employment of Fitcher and boarded Redruth and was settled in the cabin of Fitcher’s dead daughter.

The novel also contains the life of the foreign traders of Canton and the opium business. It also narrates the war against opium of the Chinese administration. The clash of interest accelerated the pace of the novel. The clash of interest brought calamities and they swayed the life of the individuals at, to quote Ghosh’s own words from “*The Great Derangement*”, p.26, “*unpredictable intervals and the most improbable ways*”.

The novel is also about supernatural and Hypnagogia and paranormal activities. The physical pleasure of Barry on the boat of Allow and the dream which caused him death by drowning under hallucinated trance induced by opium are not scary but thrilling. But Ghosh commented on this in “**The Great Derangement**”. He said “*the ghosts of literary fiction are not human either, of course, but they are certainly represented as projections of humans who were once alive*”(P.43). Here the human referent is Chi Mei and this was induced by not only by opium but also out of his utter dissatisfaction sprang from his married life and accelerated by his desperations of life.

“**Ibis**” also with its cargo of opium and its owner and entourage came to Canton. Here Babu Nobo Kissain met with Raja Neel Rattan Halder on the boat of Asha didi, an Indo-Chinese immigrant from Calcutta. They talked about the Raja’s family in Bengal and Raja was although initially loathed to recognise the gomusta but found unspeakable joy out of this remembrances although the Raja have become a commoner . The novel is a 500 page long interestingly woven narrative of history and multiculturalism and rivets freely between past and present and sprinkled generously with Hindi, Parsi, Bengali, Bhojpuri, Pidgin dialogues and words. The novel also explores the root of the globalization arising out of accidental discoveries, out of connections from wandering and free flow of information between people who are bonded by curious connections.

X. FLOOD OF FIRE

The **Flood of Fire (2015)** is the final episode of the “**Ibis**” trilogy and is set against the First Anglo-Chinese Opium War of 1839-1841 and the incidents that led Hong Kong ceded to Britain and could be a doctoral thesis instead a tale. The epilogue bears the imprint of the arduous research that the teller had undertaken. The **605** page novel with **21** chapters and **37** characters is a tale of passionate love and affection embedded in colonial history of imperialism. The novel is painted on a broad canvas and moves seamlessly between Rangpur, Assam to Canton, Bombay, Calcutta, Nayanpur, Bihar, Barrackpore, Arakan, Burma, Honam, Ranchi, Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau, Manchuria, Chusan, Fujian, Guangzhou, Manila and ends at Mauritius. The English novel is generously spiced with Bangla, Bhojpuri, Chinese, Hindi, Urdu, Pidgin, Gujrati and this multicultural vocabulary neither digressed the tale nor hung heavy on the reader but provided with the flavour of the soil. The most striking feature of the novel is that the teller impregnated the word “**subaltern**” with a new meaning and perspective. All the escapees from the “**Ibis**” re-surfaced in the novel and the novel traces their ups and downs, their tryst with their destiny and their becoming and unbecoming.

The novel initiates with Havildar Keshri Singh of 25th Regiment of Bengal Native Infantry of East India Company and he is the elder brother of Deeti. Through him Ghosh painted a caste biased society with its mores of illusory standards of kinship. Through him Ghosh also presented the oppression of the Indians by the Colonial power and is the fascinating history of the mercenary army that helped the English to rein half the world. The novel is also a tale of love and presented different layers of Human relationship and its intricate complexities – adulterous love of Mrs. Catherine Burnham and Zachary Reid, the love of Shireen Modi and Zadig Bey and affair of Paulete Lambert and Zachary Reid and the affair of Catherine Bradshaw and Officer Neville Mee. All these love affairs are beyond the accepted mores of the then society- the affair of the black “mystery” (carpenter) and the White Lady of the House, the son of a black slave and white European Girl, the daughter of a Brigadier and the son of Grocer man although both English and a Parsi Widow of Bombay and a much married Coptic catholic from Egypt. The affair of Mrs. Burnham and Mr. Reid portrays the moral hypocrisy of the Colonial Society. Although **Mihir Bose** in the “**Independent**” of 14.03.2015 observed that this affair provided the teller with the opportunity “**to take on the mantle of Kipling and explore the adulterous world of the repressed British memsahibs**” but it may also be read on the lines of “**Lady Chatterley’s Lover**” as well. The teller presented the intimacy with severe sensuous detail denouncing graphic imagery or word.

The novel also graphically presented the time in the breaking of the nation – the preparation of war, the war and the ravages of it. The hunger for want guised in the cloak of “Free Trade” and the precarious duplicity of promoting equality and abolishing tyranny dictated by religious alter of selfless morality are the basis of Imperialism and History chronicled it. The novel presented in the guise of the tale. The novel also bear the print of the teller’s one of the areas of major concern- the climate change, the carbon economy and which he has detailed in “**The Great Derangement**”. In the novel , the ironclad steamer, Nemesis was thus described “...two massive paddle-wheels were powered by engines of one hundred and twenty horsepower which daily devoured eleven tons of coal” which eventually gave the “British the right to dictate that night was day” . And in this milieu of plunder and devouring, the occidental Shireen and Zadig do not participate in the auction of land of Hong Kong and more so they have the means to participate. But they saw the future, see that the storms can be violent and can change lives so they wait for that time when backward highland will be auctioned where they will be safer and there they wish to build a Hospital in memory of Bahram.

XI. CONCLUSION

The novels of Ghosh present history innovatively exploring newer possibilities shown by Salman Rushdie. But at the same breath it also projects the concerns of the age- migration, multiculturalism, climate change, scientific reason. The novels are densely populated with the variety of characters drawn from different parts of the world. Amitav Ghosh also brilliantly used time sequence in the novels and in the most nonlinear way as possible by simply mingling the past and the present and in some cases future, too. The novels bear the print of a master craftsman, to quote his words “*an arabesque in the pattern of a carpet*”- for the enchanting characters of skilled plots set in an alluring narrative of geography. The most recurring themes of the novels are that the characters from the tales are like the teller –wanderer on a perpetual journey in search of meaning and self-actualization with the longing for home to return and in the process take another journey and establish the wisdom of the east on the hegemony of the West. Another remarkable thematic element in the novels are- storms, cyclones and gales. There are recurring narrative of storms and gales which has an autobiographical root with the novelist’s experience of the tornado of 1978 at Delhi. These storms and gales, unusual weathers shape the course of the novel as well as the life of the characters. The novelist’s experience of Egypt as a researcher also recurs in majority of the novels and many of his characters are from Egypt. The use of Indian mythology and use of Bengali proverbs is also testimony of mining his own experience. The obsession of the novelist with the supernatural, the ghosts and the haunting is also another feature of the novels which instantiates his deep bonding with the works of Rabindranath Tagore and the historical revisionism of the Indian writers writing in English.

REFERENCES

(Bib-n-web-liography)

- [1]. Ghosh, Amitav ,1986, “The Circle of Reason”, Ravi Dayal Publisher & Permanent Black, New Delhi,
- [2]. Ghosh, Amitav ,1988, “The Shadow Lines”, Ravi Dayal Publisher & Permanent Black, New Delhi,
- [3]. Ghosh, Amitav ,1996, “The Calcutta Chromosome”, Ravi Dayal Publisher & Permanent Black, New Delhi,
- [4]. Ghosh, Amitav ,2000, “The Glass Palace”, Ravi Dayal Publisher & Permanent Black, New Delhi,
- [5]. Ghosh, Amitav ,2004, “The Hungry Tide”, Ravi Dayal Publisher & Permanent Black, New Delhi,
- [6]. Ghosh, Amitav ,2009, “ Sea of Poppies”, Penguin Books India, New Delhi,
- [7]. Ghosh, Amitav,2009, “In An Antique Land”, Penguin Random House India, Gurgaon, Haryana, India
- [8]. Ghosh, Amitav,2010, “Countdown”, Penguin Books, Mumbai, India
- [9]. Ghosh, Amitav,2010, “The Imam & the Indian”, Penguin Random House India, Gurgaon, Haryana, India
- [10]. Ghosh, Amitav ,2011, “ River of Smoke”, Penguin Books India, New Delhi,
- [11]. Ghosh, Amitav ,2011, “Dancing in Cambodia and Other Essays”, Penguin Books India, New Delhi,
- [12]. Ghosh, Amitav, 2015, “Flood of Fire”, Viking, an imprint of Penguin Canada Books Inc, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
- [13]. Ghosh, Amitav,2016, “The Great Derangement”, Allen Lane an imprint of Penguin Books, Penguin Random House India, Gurgaon, Haryana, India
- [14]. Bose, Brinda (ed.) ,2017, “ Amitav Ghosh : Critical Perspectives”, Pencraft International, Delhi-110052
- [15]. Ghanshyam, G.A, Devasree Chakravarti , Rakhi Nara ,2014, “ Amitav Ghosh : A traveller Across Time and Space”, Authors Press, Q-2A, Hauz Khas Enclave, New Delhi 110016
- [16]. <https://www.amitavghosh.com/>
- [17]. <http://www.amitavghosh.com/bio.html>
- [18]. <http://www.iloveindia.com/literature/english/authors/amitav-ghosh.html>
- [19]. <http://www.indobase.com/indians-abroad/amitav-ghosh.html>
- [20]. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amitav_Ghosh
- [21]. <https://www.enotes.com/topics>
- [22]. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/>
- [23]. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>
- [24]. <http://www.npr.org/2009/01/07/98804204/>
- [25]. <https://qz.com/411578/amitav-ghoshs-ibis-trilogy-the-story-so-far/>
- [26]. <http://www.boloji.com/index.cfm?md=Content&sd=Articles&ArticleID=12202>
- [27]. <http://www.boloji.com/index.cfm?md=Content&sd=Articles&ArticleID=12222>
- [28]. <http://ashvamegh.net/hybridity-of-race-culture-amitav-ghosh-glass-palace/>
- [29]. http://abhigyananurag.blogspot.in/2011/11/man-versus-nature-eco-critical-approach_27.html
- [30]. <http://www.grfdt.com/PublicationDetails.aspx?Type=Book%20Review&TabId=6050>
- [31]. <http://www.hinduwebsite.com/hinduism/concepts/aditi.asp>
- [32]. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jun/05/all>
- [33]. <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/>

*Nilanjan Bala. "The Teller & The Tales: A Study of The Novels of Amitav Ghosh." *Quest Journals Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science* 5.8 (2017): 13-20.