



Postmodernism and the Novels of Amitav Ghosh: A Comparison

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ABSTRACT: Postmodernism includes skeptical critical interpretations of culture, literature, art, philosophy, history, linguistics, economics, architecture, fiction, feminist theory, and literary criticism. Amitav Ghosh explores extreme responses of immeasurable variety. Fiction proves itself the best in giving identity to those who decline contained within any frame. The diversity of the human self is metaphorically unfolded by juxtaposing individuals in similar but historically distanced life situations. Thus historicity is employed here for an uncommon reason of enlightening the plurality of the human self.

Keywords: Postmodernism, cultural diversity, novels, criticism

I. INTRODUCTION

Post modernism is a response against the modernist and the 'Anti-modernist' tendencies which have emotional and rational impact. Post-modernist emerged as a genre as writers break away from all the rules and seek alternative ideology of composition conforming to their content of existentialist thought [1,2].

English literature in Indian explores fragmentariness in story and character edifice in a different way from its British or American complement. There is a concern with uncertainty in the survival of humanity in post modernism of India. The picture of life demarcation by them accommodates insignificance, worthlessness and illogicality of human existence through opposition, transformation, discontinuity, arbitrariness, excess, short circuit and so on. The disordered condition of Post-modernist prose marked the world and is, however, dissimilar from that of other western countries which discards western principles and attitude as only a small part of the human experience and throw-outs such ideas, beliefs, culture and norms of the western countries [2-4].

Amitav Ghosh as a writer of post modernism in novels focuses completely on the colonialism's impecunious, and usually non-white, victims. They are given the fundamental position, not the white masters. Amitav Ghosh took nearly three and a half years to write the second book of his *Ibis* trilogy [5-7]. There is a colorful array of seamen, convicts and laborers sailing forth in the hope of transforming their lives in Amitav Ghosh's novels. Apparently, it seems that the characters are his targets. The Brits whom he depicts are basically conniving, vicious and brutal to a man, but Ghosh has portrayed them not as round characters that develop but described them as largely comic strips. The clouds of war were seen alarming, as British opium attention in India pressed for the use of force to compel the Chinese mandarins to keep open their ports, in the name of free trade as described in *The Sea of Poppies*. Emblematically, the novel thus ends amidst a raging storm, rocking the triple-masted schooner, the *Ibis*. In *The Glass Palace*, Amitav Ghosh describes the havoc caused by Japanese attack in Burma and its outcome on the Army officers and people. He creates an intelligence of unhappiness that deals with so much human catastrophe, wars, deaths, destruction and disarticulation. Ghosh penned the story of forfeit in *The Shadow Lines*, The set free of May from Muslim mobs in the collective riots of 1963-64 in Dhaka is certainly a great let go. Hence, this paper is an attempt to visualize the postmodernism in the novels of Amitav Ghosh [8-10].

A. Novels of Amitav Ghosh and Postmodernism

Amitav Ghosh articulated a developing attentiveness of the ambition, overcome and displeasure of the colonized community. In *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh routes the deliberate on eco-environment and enriching issues through the interruption of the West into East. The annihilation of traditional rural community life in *The Circle of Reason* is an parable about the modernizing invasion of western society and the consequential dislodgment of non-European peoples by imperialism. In *An Antique Land*, modern political tensions and common cracks were demarcated with the post-modernist that were not reachable. Postcolonial colonization is yet another mannerism of postmodernism and it is an idea in *The Hungry Tide*, the ruthless inhibition and mass execution of East Pakistani immigrant who

had run away from the Dandakaranya immigrant camps to Marichjhampi as they felt that the latter area would make available them with recognizable environs and consequently a improved life [11]. The indentured laborers and offenders are elated to the island of Mauritius on the ship Ibis where they experience a lot in *Sea of Poppies*.

Burmese Royal family, after the deport, lives an painful life in India in *The Glass Palace*. Rajkumar, who accumulates amount in Burma is compulsory to go away his home and business due to Japanese attack. He spent several weeks in Guangzhou and learnt some Cantonese to portray the backdrop of the novel which is set in Fanquit town. Most of the accomplishment occurs in Guangzhou. The novel which deals with opium trade in China is also not a solitary linear Like the *Sea of Poppies*. Like Lawrence Durrell's Alexandria Quartet, the association between *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke* is a 'peripheral one' as Amitav Ghosh himself describes it. The mash-up of fact and fiction works, coalescing into a description shaped by cataclysmic historical events but inflected with small-scale personal drama beautifully works here in the novel [12-14].

Indian writing in English has embossed its immensity by mixing up convention and modernity in the production of drawing. At the outset, the oral communication of Indian literary works gained ground progressively. It created an ineradicable mark in the mind and heart of the lovers of art. The attention in prose lit the blazing desire of the writers which twisted their energy and technique to innovate new form and style of writing.

Earlier novels projected India's legacy, convention, cultural past and decent values. But a extraordinary change can be noticed in the novels published after the First World War, which is called, modernism. Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee and Amitav Ghosh are the makers of new pattern in writing novels with post-modern opinion and emotions.

Amitav Ghosh is one among the postmodernists and is enormously prejudiced by the political and cultural milieu of post independent India. Being a social anthropologist and having the occasion of visiting unfamiliar lands, he comments on the present scenario the world is passing through in his novels. Cultural disintegration, colonial and neo-colonial power structures, cultural degeneration, the materialistic offshoots of modern civilization, dying of human relationships, amalgamation of facts and fantasy, search for love and security, diasporas, etc., are the major preoccupations in the writings of Amitav Ghosh.

The elemental traits of post-modernism are perceptibly present in the novels of Amitav Ghosh. As per postmodernists, national boundaries are a encumbrance to human communication. They believe that Nationalism causes wars. So, post-modernists speak in favor of globalization.

Amitav Ghosh's novels centre on multiracial and multiethnic issues; as a peripatetic multinational he roves around and weaves them with his narrative attractiveness. In *The Shadow Lines*, Amitav Ghosh makes the East and West meet on a plinth of friendship, especially through the characters like Tridib, May, Nice Prince etc., He advocates more on the globalization rather than nationalization. In *The Glass Palace*, the story of half-bred Rajkumar revolves around Burma, Myanmar and India. He travels round many places freely and gains profit. Unpredictably, his happiness ends when his son is killed by Japanese bomb blast. The reason for this calamity is fighting for national boundaries.

Amitav Ghosh has been accredited for productively mastering the genre known as 'magical realism' which was largely developed in India by Salman Rushdie and in South America by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Ghosh is seen as "belonging to this international school of writing which productively deals with the post-colonial ethos of the modern world without sacrificing the ancient histories of separate lands." Like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh perfectly blends fact and fiction with magical realism. He reconceptualizes society and history. He is so methodical in the collection of material, semiotical in the organization of material, so creative in the formation of fictionalized history [3,7,9].

B. Opinion on Amit Ghosh Novels with respect postmodernism

According to Balaram, "Weaving is Reason, which makes the world mad and makes it human" [15]. In other words, reason is action, whereby people can produce their own discursive truth by interconnecting or weaving various discursive threads into their own personal texture. The narration is connected with weaving by Amitav Ghosh. The weaver creates a gorgeous material by using the loom of different threads. Like the same manner, the author employs utterances and recitation to form narratives to unite many instances, place and beliefs.

Indian English Fiction, today, is dominated by the second generation of postcolonial writers, who were born after decolonization. These writers were born in Indian soil and write in English with more enthusiasm, idiosyncratic accent, verve, boom and a level of self-sufficiency than colonials. Writers like Salman Rushdie, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Rohinton Mistry, Vikram Seth and Amitav Ghosh boast unconventional Indian English Literature from the regal repression. The honour received by them put Indian English Literature in global gaze. These writers "write to establish their individual identity independent of their colonizer and try to show that not only they have gained independence from the latter but successfully made the colonizer's language as a vehicle for creative expression" [16].

In *The Circle of Reason*, Amitav Ghosh addresses the experience of postcolonial migration, alienation and rootlessness, and delves deep into the psyche of people caught up in the vortex of partition. The novel is divided into three different sections called *Satva: Reason, Rajas: Passion and Tamas: Death*. The precarious life that the migrants live in the gulf countries, the transience of freedom and material prosperity in modern life are foregrounded in this novel. The ancient oriental oral narrative tradition has been employed by the author to distinguish his personal style. The different parts of the novel are connected by Alu, the protagonist, who runs away the Indian powers after being fallaciously blamed of terrorist activity. Weaving is the process for generating relations by interlacing various discursive threads, is the general motif running through the novel [17].

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 [18].

In the novel *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh delineates the term post colonialism as it is applied to the cultures which are infected and affected by the process that was adopted by imperialists in their process of colonization. The process of suppressing the minority, domination, cultural taboos was prevalent in this novel. This imperialist policy of Western colonialists was just meant for cultural domination. However, postcolonialism is a complex cultural process that represents the general mood of a particular period of history, as shown by ideas, beliefs or the spirit of the times. Postcolonialism offers variegated perspective of colonization. Hence, the colonial life and history have been looked differently over the period of time [19].

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 Homi Bhabha as agonistic uncertainty. The king with his binoculars tries to scan city's waterfront and carriage with hurrying people. Amitav Ghosh in the memories of the city constructs the entire history of Rangoon and comes to the realization that both Indian and Burmese being under the impact British power were destined to work rigorous menial work like in the docks and hills and the pull rickshaw [19].

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* depicts different aspects of postcolonialism like the sundarbans refugees' agony when come back to their home, local people like illiterate Fokir and Horen, educated Nirmal and Nilima with their postnationalist dreams, to control the disaster happening in the lives of local people in Lusibari island. Translator Kanai from Delhi, who is going to visit her aunt Nilima Bose, and a cytologist Piyali Roy daughter of Bengali immigrants, comes with an ambition to study marine mammals of sundarland. All these characters are the product of postcolonial world. The readers study the life of 'tide country' against the back ground of the postcolonial aspects [20].

The Hungry Tide helps to understand a group of islands with the human comprehension that is dependent ahead a multifaceted of language, discursive and fabric reasons. The novel illustrates that though there is no particular punitive structure, it is equipped with the charge of a wide-ranging study of an island or a group of islands and unintentionally supply to the study of the possible interdisciplinary learning of the island. In this novel, it prompts readers to think a soul's resolution in innovative manners about the islands especially, in relative to land masses the idea of feeling is till marked by British Colonialist inheritance. The various methods in of individual and grouping interpret and lucid familiarities in meticulous islands are particularly related to the hypothetical effort of the island studies to develop a tinged vocabulary [3,21].

All the characters in *Sea of Poppies* gathered in Kolkata to board in Ibis ship at Hoogli. They belong to numerous contests and people of contradictory social groups, belief and gender. Ghosh's copious and deft details with the characters make the reader well-known with their respective ethnicity and inheritance. The novel exhibits a dozen of major characters like Ibis, Deeti Singh, Burnham Brothers, Kalua, Zachary Reid, Serang Ali, Putli, Jodu, Mauritian, Raja Neel Rattan Halder, Baboo Nob Kissin, Ah-Fatt and Lascars. Ibis is a slave-trading ship with a British boss, an American, Indian troop to retain law and order, and a squad of lascars and it is pressed into service to transport girmitiya, indentured labourers, to plantations on the island of Mauritius. People of all race, locale and beliefs are passengers and they are in voyage to the sea to tide over the crises at home, some being transported as condemns. They begin their lives afresh and their old ancestral knots and sketches are washed away as they travel by water to the Hooghly and into the Indian Ocean [11].

Slowly, as the women's voices grew in strength and confidence, the men forgot their quarrels: at home too, during village weddings it was always the women who sang when the bride was torn from her parent's embrace. It was as if they were acknowledging through their silence, that they, as men, had no words to describe the pain of a child who is exiled from home [12].

Amitav Ghosh in *Sea of Poppies* 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 as objects of quenching carnal desire and household maid servants. Amitav Ghosh portrays characters from all strata of society and all part of the world and so is the language used by them. Such homogeneous amalgamation and confluence of the elite and the subaltern, the occidental and the oriental, the master and the slave influence the readers of all persuasions [8].

The uneven and non-linear presentation is replaced by chronologically planned narration. The major European writers in the customary method of narration, in their imposing narratives give way to polyphonic narration with multiple voices of narrators. The stream of consciousness technique which enables the writer to delineate the running thoughts of the characters and the workings of their mindscape is supplemented by ultra-modern innovative techniques by exploring the possibility of the replicated world. The novels of that period become visible in the postmodern tendency of abandoning omniscient authorship. The omnipresent narrator who pretends to know everything and who makes judgment upon characters gives way to polyphonic or multi-voiced narratives. As thought process is non-linear, fragmented narration is followed to give a realistic portrayal of the mindset of people.

II. CONCLUSION

In the contemporary world, all the information's are connected with knowledge, and are distinguished with sequence of events. The principle of the liberal arts is that knowledge is good for individual's own sake. In general, one can gain knowledge through studying literature of Amitav Ghosh education to be alive as learned and as skilled person. In the world of postmodernism, to become knowledgeable is purposeful not to be qualified with obsessions but, to use that knowledge. Amitav Ghosh novels are characterized not only by its value, but also it is spread, accumulated, and set in a different way in the postmodern society than the modern world. Amitav Ghosh, as a post modern writer proves this statement by the various phenomena of this research through his novels.

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