

Joy T.T. “Indianness in Indian Writing in English: A Study of Amitav Ghosh’s Novels.” Thesis. Research and Postgraduate Department of English, ST. Thomas’ College, Thrissur (Autonomous), University of Calicut, 2021.

### Chapter III

#### **Indian Elements in the Religious and Economic dimensions and Their Depiction in Ghosh's Novels**

Religion has a great role in Indian society from its early history onwards. Most of the people in India believe in a supreme being, God, who controls everything in our life. Each individual in the society follows a set of principles of a particular religion in his / her personal life. It has laid emphasis on some values and standards to be followed in human life. But along with this, it has also insisted some ceremonies, rituals and practices, and they have been followed even after the attainment of independence. For example, the Indian society shows great respect to Swamis and Sanyasis who don't have any material interest in their life. They dedicate their lives fully to the matters of the spirit. They lead a simple life and they are free from all worldly vices. People regard them as a source of spiritual comfort. They follow certain role models taken from the classics like *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*.

The widespread education has made modern Indian more rational and sensible, and has begun to question the prevailing customs and practices in the society. It is pointed out that such things are mere blind beliefs and superstitions. Many Indian English novelists like Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Balanchandra Rajan, etc. have raised their voice against such practices prevailing in the society. Besides, they think that the influence of religion leads a large number of people to fanaticism, fundamentalism, and blind imitation of dead customs.

The renunciation of worldly possessions and selfish motives is the foundation stone of Indian religions. The four stages of life as enshrined in the Vedas are Brahmacharya, Garhasthya, Vanaprastha and Sanyas or sacrificing of all wealth and worldly concerns in order to attain a state of spiritual freedom and enlightenment. It has remarkable similarity to the principles followed in Christianity and Buddhism. Almost all religions in India regard the life of a monk as superior to the life of an ordinary person. B.R. Agrawal and M. Sinha have commented on this topic in their book *Major Trends in the Post -Independence Indian English Fiction* like this:

Indian thinkers and philosophers like Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda and ancient spiritualists like Nanak, Sankaracharya, Chaitanya etc. have upheld the ideals of renunciation and asceticism. A study of the postindependence Indian English novels reveals the recurrence of this theme of renunciation and asceticism, as a great ideal in Indian life and culture. In many of these novels we encounter men who adhere to the ideals of non-attachment, desirelessness and selfless love towards people of all classes (187).

Meenakshi Mukherjee, a scholar on Indian writing in English, has remarked that the ascetic in saffron robe is a ready-made symbol at the disposal of the Indian novelists. She means that the Sadhus in saffron robe are very common in the Indian English novels written even after the attainment of independence. Sometimes they are presented as positive characters as exerting benevolent and consoling influence on those who approach them for solace and peace of mind in their utter disappointed situations of life (106). Whereas in some novels similar characters have been introduced as exerting an insidious influence on people who confront difficult crises in life. e.g., Mulk - Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, R.K. Narayan's

*The Guide*, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, Kamala Markandaya's *A Silence of Desire*, Bhabani Bhattacharya's *He Who Rides a Tiger*, etc.

Mulk Raj Anand has tried to substantiate the belief through his novels that the Sadhus exploit common people in the name of religion. He argues that these Sadhus are not really ascetics but fake priests leading immoral life. The priest in the temple in *Untouchable* highlights his conviction. When he does not succeed in his attempt to rape Bakha's sister, he complains of impurity in coming near to her. In *Coolie* the ascetic performs certain religious rites to a barren lady and tries to enjoy physical pleasures from her. Similarly, Mulk Raj Anand introduces another fake priest in his novel *The Road*. In the beginning of the novel the Brahmin priest appears as a devout follower of ideals in the scriptures, sanctimonious and religious leader of the society, but later it is proved that he is a debauchee at heart.

In the case of R.K. Narayan it seems that he has complete faith in asceticism or renunciation of worldly goods and attachments for the sake of salvation of soul. But he has presented such characters differently in his novels. In *Waiting for Mahatma* he introduces Mahatma Gandhi as an ideal ascetic who can love and sympathize with all types of people. Covered simple white cloths he walks along the villages on foot and talks to the villagers about spinning, making and wearing khadi dress. He conveys to them the message of love and ahimsa. Thus, Narayan presents Gandhi in the role of a traditional Indian ascetic in the true sense of the word. His saintly philosophy of life resembles to the voice of God himself.

At the same time Narayan presents another type of ascetic in his novel *The Guide*. Raju, the protagonist in the novel is forced to spend a long time in a jail as a punishment for his criminal offence. After releasing from the prison with long hair and beard, he does not go to his own native village. While he is wandering in the village, people think of him an ascetic and thus he becomes a Sadhu unwillingly. Soon he tries his best to perform the varied rites

and rituals successfully. Though Raju doesn't expect any miracle for having rain in the village due to his fasting, he decides to be serious and graceful in his new role as an act of self - discipline. In the last stage of his life he has achieved salvation, a state of renunciation and real human status through his integration with the life of the community.

Raja Rao also has presented characters giving importance to the high ideals of renunciation and sainthood in his pre-independence novel, *Kanthapura*. The narrator is an old grandmother, who tells the story in the garrulous, digressive and breathless style of the Indian purana or The Harikatha, mixing freely narration, description, reflection, religious discourse, folk-lore, etc. Raja Rao has boldly translated Indian words, phrases, expletives and idioms from his native Kannada into English. Moorthy, the main character, rises above the desires of the flesh, the fear of suffering, the excommunication or censure of his fellow beings. He is a Gandhian who knows that the essence of the Indian culture lies in religion.

Religion is closely associated in most of the activities of the majority people in India. Whenever they do have a fortune or misfortune in their life, they give either its credit or its curse to the concerned god or goddess. Uma's nephew Arjun gets selection as an officer cadet to The Indian Military Academy in Dehra Dun. The family members couldn't believe what they have heard because for generations, recruitment into the British Indian army had been controlled by racial policies that excluded most men in the country, including those from Bengal. It was impossible for Indians until quite recently to enter the army as commissioned officers. The Indian Military Academy in Dehra Dum of was founded only five years before and the fact that some of its seats were open to public examination had gone largely unnoticed. The reaction of his father is noteworthy: "But Arjun's father was not at all displeased by the news: on the contrary, he was so glad that he immediately organised an expedition of thanksgiving to the temple at Kalighat."(276).

Ghosh has presented innumerable characters belonging to different religions. He gives meticulous attention in moulding his characters and therefore the diverse aspects of each religion have to be narrated in detail. In this regard he shows a particular interest in focussing the major ideas of Buddhism. With this intension in his mind he has cast the character Dolly in *The Glass Palace*. As Dolly was born and brought up in Burma, she followed Buddhism. While her daughter -in-law Manju was pregnant, she gave more importance to its religious practices. They participated in Thadin, the annual three-month period of reflection and abstinence. Often Dolly would read to Manju the scriptures in translation because Manju knew neither Pali nor Burmese. One day Dolly chose a discourse by the Buddha, addressed to his son, Rahula: She read:

*Develop a state of mind like the earth, Rahula, for on the earth all manner of things are thrown, clean and unclean, dung and urine, spittle, pus and blood, and the earth is not troubled or repelled or disgusted...develop a state of mind like water, for in the water many things are thrown, clean and unclean, and the water is not troubled or repelled or disgusted. And so too with fire, which burns all things, clean and unclean, and with air, which blows upon them all, and with space, which is now here established... (367).*

Amitav Ghosh had chosen the apt occasion to quote the words of Buddha and Dolly's reading of his exact words become a great relief to Manju who is in great tension about delivery. He shows his great respect to those words by printing them in italics. The words are so powerful that they even calm the mind of the readers. Though, Manju is a Hindu, Buddha's words have touched her deeply. After her delivery holding her daughter to her breast, Manju remembered a passage that Dolly had read to her just a few days before: "... it was from the Buddha's first sermon, delivered at Sarnath, two thousand and five hundred years

before...*birth is sorrow, age is sorrow, disease is sorrow, death is sorrow; contact with the unpleasant is sorrow, separation from the pleasant is sorrow, every wish unfulfilled is sorrow...*"(368).

Ghosh presents Dolly as an apt disciple of Buddha in the last part of the novel. He has taken keen interest to mould this character as the personification of the spirit of endurance and acceptance. She is always ready to yield and give in, and this nature in her character is her source of strength. She becomes a solid support in all crises of Rajkumar and his family. After the tragical death of Neel in the timberyard, Dolly tries to look after Manju and her daughter like a guardian angel. At the time of Japanese invasion in Rangoon during World War II, it becomes fatal for Rajkumar and his family to remain there. By this time Manju's behaviour became very erratic. Dolly and Rajkumar decided to take Manju to Calcutta. Their journey from Rangoon to Calcutta was a miserable one which could not be described in words. While they were crossing a river, Manju handed over her baby to Dolly and committed suicide falling into the river.

In 1942 Rajkumar, Dolly and Manju's baby reached to Lankasuka in Calcutta where Uma and Bela were living. For the next six years Dolly and Rajkumar stayed with Uma, in her flat. The baby Jaya, became a bond linking every member of the household. Dolly got a job in an army publications unit, translating wartime pamphlets into Burmese. Rajkumar worked as a supervisor at sawmills and timber yards. In January 1948 Burma got independence from the British. Soon after this Dolly decided that she and Rajkumar would return to Rangoon, at least for a while. In the meantime, they would entrust Jaya with her aunt Bela and her other grandparents. Dolly's eagerness to return to Burma was due to the fact that she had not heard anything from Dinu for the least seven years. She believed that he was still alive and wished to see him. She realised that though Rajkumar was willing to accompany her at first, he was not interested to leave the child whom he was very fond of. So

she decided to leave Rajkumar in Lankasuka itself for his own sake and Jaya's. Uma agreed with the opinion of Dolly. Dolly booked a single, one-way passage to Rangoon at the steamship company's office. She was sure that Rajkumar would accompany her if he learnt of her plans and therefore she didn't tell him anything about her trip to Rangoon. She did her daily business as usual.

On the morning of the departure, Dolly cooked Rajkumar's favourite dish, mohingya noodles. They went for a walk around the lake and afterwards Rajkumar fell asleep. Uma consented Dolly to accompany her to the Khidderpore docks. Both of them knew the finality of that departure and they were silent on the way. Ghosh's excellence in narrating a farewell scene is clearly evident here: At the end, when Dolly was about to board her ship, she said to Uma:

'I know Jaya will be fine. There are many of you to care for her. It's Rajkumar that I'm worried about.' 'He'll be all right, Dolly.' 'Will you look after him, Uma? For my sake?' 'I will; I promise.' At Lankasuka, Rajkumar woke to find a note on his pillow: it was written in Dolly's careful hand. He picked up the note and smoothed it down. It said: Rajkumar -in my heart, I know that Dinu is still alive and that I shall find him. After that I shall go to Sagaing as I have so long wanted to do. Know that nothing in this world will be harder to renounce than you and the memory of our love. Dolly. He never saw her again (482).

No doubt the above-mentioned passage is the most memorable one in the novel. It highlights Ghosh's concept of Buddhism by shaping a woman character, Dolly, in all her doings. She does all her duties well as a maid, wife, mother, mother-in-law, friend, etc. and finally decides to spend the remaining part of life in God's presence and decides to go to Sagaing. Ghosh's concept of religion is better revealed through this character. He believes



that religion must help an average human being to perform his / her duties in this world with a calm and quite mind, and after that he/she can give up everything in this world however great and intimate they are. Man gets final solace in the presence of God.

Ghosh has presented several characters belonging to different religions in this novel and has given due attention to their religious beliefs and practices. In the beginning of *Sea of Poppies* the novelist describes how Deeti, the protagonist of the novel, begins her normal routine:

The village in which Deeti lived was on the outskirts of the town of Ghazipur, some fifty miles east of Benares. Like all her neighbours, Deeti was preoccupied with the lateness of her poppy crop: that day, she rose early and went through the motions of her daily routine, laying out a freshly-washed dhoti and kameez for Hukam Singh, her husband, and preparing the rotis and achar he would eat at midday. Once his meal had been wrapped and packed, she broke off to pay a quick visit to her shrine room: later, after she'd bathed and changed, Deeti would do a proper puja, with flowers and offerings; now, being clothed still in her night - time sari, she merely stopped at the door, to join her hands in a brief genuflection (3).

The above scene in the morning is very common in Hindu families and it highlights Indianness in religious aspects. The primary duty of a wife in the morning is to get ready everything for her husband for going to work. Soon after that she has to pay homage to God. To offer a proper puja before the shrine in the prayer room, a devotee has to follow certain strict rules and practices. As Deeti has not changed the sari which she put on the previous night, she does not enter the prayer room. She just prays at the entrance holding her hands together. Apparently it is a trivial thing, but Ghosh gives more importance to this as an Indian English writer. After a few urgent cooking, both the mother and the daughter went near to the

Ganga for bathing. The novelist has keenly observed such scenes and writes: “A pace or two from the water’s edge, they shouted an invocation to the river - Jai Ganga Mayya ki..... - and gulped down a draught of air, before throwing themselves in” (6). This line throws light to the fact how Hindus regard the river Ganga. Its holiness is stressed in the above line. The writer narrates in detail how Deeti and her daughter come to the prayer room:

They changed quickly and filled a pitcher with water from the Ganga, for the puja room. When they were back at home, Deeti lit a lamp before leading Kabutri into the shrine. The room was dark, with soot-blackened walls, and it smelled strongly of oil and incense. There was a small altar inside, with statues of Shivji and Bhagwan Ganesh, and framed prints of Ma Durga and Shri Krishna. But the room was a shrine not just to the gods but also to Deeti’s personal pantheon, and it contained many tokens of her family and forebears - among them such relics as her dead father’s wooden clogs, a necklace of rudraksha beads left to her by her mother, and faded imprints of her grandfather’s feet, taken on their funeral pyres (7).

Ghosh tells the world how an average Indian woman regards her belief in God and how it connects her respect to the family members who passed away on different occasions. Our faith in God is closely associated with our elders and relatives. Our family ties are not at all superficial and they can never be likened to that of western culture. Being a historian and philanthropist, Ghosh counts such aspects of human life, especially in India, and brings them out on befitting occasions through proper characters.

### **Observations on the Economic conditions of India**

### **Colonial exploitation of people, Nature and animals in *The Glass Palace***

The Colonial people expanded the British empire in Asian countries like India, Burma, Malaya, etc. for their economic benefits. Ghosh goes deeper into the timber export in Burma and the rubber plantation in Malaya like a researcher to find out the real nature of exploitation under colonial rule. Both timber and rubber were not a part of the merchandise culture in Burma and Malaya before they were colonized. The British merchants found out the infinite possibility of earning huge profits from the dense forest filled with heavy teaks in Burma. Similarly, they understood the geographical features and climate in Malaya as the most appropriate for rubber plantation. Thus, they commodified and transformed Nature both in Burma and Malaya for their economic benefits.

The British cleared the evergreen teak forests in large quantities. More natives were recruited as coolies or slaves to the felling units in the forests. Even elephants were used for logging teaks. Saya John explains to Rajkumar the changes happened in the Burmese life:

Look at the oo-sis in this camp; look at the hsin-ouq, lying on his mat, dazed with opium; look at the false pride they have in their skill as trainers of elephants. They think, because their fathers and their families have all worked with elephants, that no one knows their animals as they do. Yet until the Europeans came none of them had ever thought of using elephants for the purpose of logging. Their elephants were used only in pagodas and palaces for wars and ceremonies. It was the Europeans who saw that tame elephants could be made to work for human profit. It was they who invented everything we see around us in this logging camp. This entire way of life is their creation. It was they who thought of these methods of girdling trees, these ways of moving logs with elephants, this system of floating them down river ( 74).

Thus, the elephants that were the symbol of power, dignity and authority were transformed into commodities. They were degenerated to the levels of mere slaves and tools for accumulating profit.

Ghosh describes in detail how poor people in Madras were recruited and taken to Rangoon in Burma like a historian. Rajkumar borrowed a few hundred rupees from Saya John and three months later he left for India with Baburao. He had to travel for four days from Rangoon to Calcutta and four more days to reach to Madras. Baburao rented two ox-carts at a small market town and decorated them with festive cloths. He bought several sacks of parched rice from the bazaar and recruited six stick-wielding lathiyals to act as guards. They moved to the countryside accompanied by drummers like a bridal procession. On the way Baburao collected more details about the surrounding villages and the natives.

Rajkumar, Baburao and their team stopped at a small hamlet and Baburao seated himself under an immense banyan tree. The drummers started beating their instruments. At once people including women with their babies from the nearby huts and fields gathered around them. Baburao made an eloquent speech explaining that Burma was a land of gold and the British Sarkar had declared it as a part of India. He convinced the people that he was able to become immensely rich only because of the prosperity in Burma. He invited them to accompany him in order to work in Burma and many of them came forward to accept his invitation.

When they reached the coast, Baburao hired a country boat to take them to Calcutta. Many of them were traveling in the sea for the first time in their life. At Calcutta they boarded the S.S. Dufferin which was owned by a British company. They had brought thirty-eight men with them from Madras and arranged space for them at the rear of the ship. Their condition in the ship was beyond all our imagination. Ghosh writes:

Some two thousand other would-be immigrants were there already. Most were men, but there were also some hundred and fifty women. At the back, jutting out over the ship's wake, there was a narrow wooden platform with four holes to serve as toilets. The passage was rough and the floor of the holding area was soon covered with vomit and urine. This foul-smelling layer of slime welled back and forth with the rolling of the ship, rising inches high against the walls. The recruits sat huddled on their tin boxes and cloth bundles. At the first sight of land, off the Arakan coast, several men leapt off the ship. By the third day of the voyage the number of people in the hold had dwindled by a few dozen. The corpses of those who had died on board were carried to the stern and dropped into the ship's churning wake. On reaching the Rangoon docks, Baburao found that the voyage had cost him two men. He was not displeased. 'Two out of thirty-eight is not bad,' he told Rajkumar. 'On occasion I've lost as many as six' (136).

Rajkumar made huge profit by recruiting people to the labour camps in the rubber plantations in Malaya. He justifies his involvement in human trade in indentured labour. He regards it as a charity work because he is helping them to improve their life and welfare. Their economic status is more stabilized as indentured labourers. He regards this world itself as a place for consumption. His attitude of consumption leads him to exploit the helpless women, whom he transports from India to Malaya as coolies. To him they don't have any identity and they are unnamed women. He seduces one such woman and she gives birth to a child of Rajkumar, namely Ilongo. Rajkumar doesn't feel any sense of guilt in having given birth to an illegitimate son. He compensates the whole affair by giving enough money to the unfortunate.

**Colonial exploitation of the poor in *Sea of Poppies***

Colonial exploitation of the poor is one of the major themes of Indianness. The story begins among the people lived in Ghazipur, a small Hindu village bordering between Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. People used to grow wheat, cereal and pulses which have been staple food items in the Indian subcontinent for centuries. The British trading company forced them to stop the farming of their traditional food crops and compelled them to cultivate poppy plants. The British factories process these plants in order to extract opium and export it to China in large scale. The majority of the people work in those factories for low wages. Deeti's husband Hukam Singh, an ex-soldier works in Ghazipur opium factory. Here the colonizer exploits the poor villagers in two ways: the authorities tempt them to stop farming of their traditional food crops and lead them to starvation. Besides they lose their employability in farming and are forced to work at low wages in opium factories. The working conditions prevalent in the Ghazipur Opium factory is another example for how the colonizers exploited the Indians. Once Deeti is summoned to the factory to take her sick husband home. She couldn't believe what she witnessed there: "Their eyes were vacant ...completely naked" (p 95). As a historian Amitav Ghosh brings out this unnoticed page of Indian history very realistically. No other Indian English writers have torched on to this dark side of the Indian village life. Binayak Roy has made a comment on the poor Indians in *Sea of Poppies*:

*Sea of Poppies* explores the destruction of indigenous agricultural practices in history when native peasants were forced by colonizers to cultivate opium.

This ecological imperialism was aggravated by the transportation of a pauperized pool of landless laborers to Mauritius. This led to the development of the capitalist world economy with its open plunder of the periphery for the benefit of the center (154).

Ghosh clearly exposes how the judiciary under colonial rule tortures the Indians even the well-off landlords. Such a case is brought out through the landlord of Rashkali, Neel Rattan Halder. He had an unshakable faith in the company's policy and a high regard for the Queen's rule. He and his late father had business dealings with the British merchant, Mr. Burnham. He was ignorant of the cunningness of the colonial agent. Later there arose a dispute between the two and the English magistrate Kendalbish awarded the sentence in favour of his own countryman Mr. Burnham. There were clear indications of the British merchant's forgery. Even then the British Magistrate makes his judgement in an impassive voice:

‘Being unwilling to add further to your distress,’ said the judge, ‘it is sufficient to say that none of the applications made on your behalf have suggested a single proper ground for altering the course of the law. Recent precedent, in England as well as in this country, has established forgery to be a felony for which the forfeiture of property is an inadequate penalty: it carries the additional sanction of transportation beyond the seas for a term to be determined by the court. It is in keeping with these precedents that this court pronounces its sentence, which is that all your properties are to be seized and sold, to make good your debts, and that you yourself are to be transported to the penal settlement on the Mauritius Islands for a period of no less than seven years. So, let it be recorded on this, the twentieth day of July, in the year of Our Lord, 1838...’ (*Sea of Poppies*, 239).

Ghazipur Opium Factory harvests high profit out of its opium export business to China. But it does not give any financial compensation to Deeti after her husband's death. As a widow and the mother of a girl child, Deeti deserves a reasonable help from the company for the premature death of Hukam Singh. The company doesn't show any moral obligation to

help a destitute who has no other source for survival. The prevailing British judiciary has no provision to insist the company to do something for the unfortunate.

### **Migration of Indians to new British Colonies**

The migration of poor Indians to new British colonies is a common Indian theme in Indian writing in English. Ghosh depicts the situation, highlighting the reasons for such migration. The third part of the novel 'Sea' takes place in the schooner which moves from Calcutta to its destination in Mauritius. Some coolies sign the agreement of labour contract to escape from the poverty and misery at home. Deeti, the protagonist in the novel, is forced to perform 'sati' when her husband Hukam Singh meets a premature death. In the critical moment, just before burning to ashes, Kalua, an untouchable lower caste oxman from the neighbouring village, rescues her. Her escape is not acceptable to her upper caste relatives. In order to escape from the wrath of Deeti's in-laws, she and Kalua become indentured workers on the schooner named 'Ibis'.

Neel Rattan Halder, the native king of Rakshali, who has business dealings with the British, is tried for forgery by Burnham and his cronies. The court punishes him by sentencing him to work as an indentured labourer for seven years in Mauritius. When he comes to the prison in the *Ibis* he gets Ah Fatt, a half Chinese and a half-Parsi, an opium addict from Canton, as his sole companion. Later the two are taken together on the *Ibis*.

Paulette, a French orphan born and brought up in Calcutta easily disguises herself as an Indian woman joins among the indentured workers on the *Ibis*. She feels more at ease with Indian manners, food, and clothing than with Western ones. After her father's death Mr. Burnham and his family take up her protection. Later she finds that the British family has a plan to get her married to Justice Kendalbish, an old Englishman. So, she decides to run away and joins the *Ibis* disguising herself in a sari.



Ghosh describes the sufferings of the people in labour camp at Calcutta. It is another aspect of Indianness. It was the time of Diwali. The city resounded with celebrations. But there wasn't any sort of enjoyment in the camp. The silence within the camp all the more difficult to bear for the inmates. When Diwali came, the migrants marked it by lighting a few lamps - silently. They had no idea when they would start from Calcutta. New rumours spread in the camp each day. Deeti and Kalua were the only people who believed that a ship would come to take them away. Many of them regarded the camp as a jail where they had been sent to die. Their bodies would be turned into skulls and skeletons, then they could be cut up and fed to the sahib's dogs, or used as bait for fish. The people gathered outside the fence stared at the inmates as if at animals in a cage. The novelist describes:

One day a migrant tried to escape from the camp. Soon he was caught and brought back to the camp by the spectators outside. He was beaten severely and had to live without food for two days. Several people fell ill due to the poor climate of the city. Some recovered, but others wanted to be sick and to die at the earliest. One night a very young boy became seriously ill, but the sirdars and maistries were drinking toddy and they didn't give him any attention. Before daybreak the boy died. The overseers showed responsibility in carrying the dead body to the nearby burning ghats for cremation. They did not permit the girmityas to accompany the dead body. Later a vendor whispered through the fence that the boy had not been cremated at all: 'a hole had been bored in his skull and his corpse had been hung up by the heels, to extract the oil - the mimiai - ka - tel - from his brain (340).

The migrants talked of pujas and namazes, of recitations of the *Qur'an* and the *Ramacharitmanas* and the *Alha-khand* to overcome their hurdles in going to Mauritius. Their great trust in God for mercy is another element of Indianness.

Ghosh has taken special care to present middle class people in his works. Makarand R. Paranjape of Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi has studied how Ghosh has presented middle class people in his novels and made the following observation:

To me Ghosh's work is especially important because it represents his problematic relationship with the dominant ideology of the still significant *bhadrasamaj* in Bengal and in India. By *bhadrasamaj*, which may be translated as "genteel society". I mean the Bengali bourgeoisie newly emergent under colonialism. This amorphous and diverse "middle class" was not only constituted by colonialism but also went on to resist it to help forge the nation that became India ("Beyond the Subaltern Syndrome", 358).

Nandini C Sen, University of Delhi, examines the various aspects of Diaspora narrated in the novel *Sea of Poppies* and makes the following comment in the conclusion of her essay:

A close examination of the South Asian diaspora shows that it can be divided into two distinct phases. Paranjape categorises them as 'settler' or 'visitor' diasporas, taking his cue from *The Empire Writes Back*. Into the first category falls all the forced migrations on account of slavery or indentured labour; and into the second, the voluntary migrations of businessmen and professionals. *Sea of Poppies* being the first of a trilogy, Ghosh concentrates indentured labourers and recreates their voyage across the seas. It is a richly woven story of a voyage where people from all walks of life come together, and the stores of their lives form the tapestry on which the novel is based. However, it is important to remember that Ghosh's attempt is fraught with imagination and his story-telling does not approximate to reality (212-213).