

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 VII

Conclusion

When this research project was designed in 2012, English was generally acknowledged as a colonial language. But in 2018 the Central Government of India declared Jnanpith Award to Amitav Ghosh who has been writing exclusively in English. So far, this prestigious award was bestowed upon the eminent writers in different regional languages like Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, Telug, Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, etc. By conferring this award to a writer in English language, the nation declares that English is really an Indian language and not a colonial language. Majority of our linguists view English as a convenient and comfortable language for the purpose of administration and judiciary. They do not approve Indian sensibility in English and insist that our tradition and culture can be brought out only through native languages.

The new generation of Indian English writers question the above traditional vision and substantiate their potential to express their Indian sensibility in English itself. No doubt Amitav Ghosh is one of the leading figures among the new generation of Indian English writers. In this context it is better to remember an apt comment made by Sunil Gangopadhyay, the great Bengali writer about Amitav Ghosh on the occasion of releasing his novel, *The Hungry Tide*: “Look ! This is a Bengali novel, written in English only!” (19). However time has proved that the choice of case study of Ghosh’s novels to establish the various aspects of Indianness in Indian Writing in English is an apt decision in the present context.

Ghosh's contribution to world literature

Apparently the term “world literature” was first coined by Goethe in 1827. By the term, he meant gaining a way to universal human experience through cross-cultural understanding. It was achieved by reading the leading writers of other (Western) nations. There was to be an open dialogue between nations, through which their literatures would eventually reach a synthesis. Today the status of nations has changed dramatically from Goethe's times and trade and communication have multiplied in quantity and speed. We now live in the era of global multicultural world literatures. The aim of the new world literature should try to share universal human experience. It should aim at a peaceful fusion of all differences into some kind of homogeneous multicultural experience.

Ghosh has tried his best through his writing to present the various processes of globalization and power-relationships representing different classes, cultures and ideologies. Although Ghosh's writing is to be identified as postcolonial, he has kept his distance from this field and concentrated on describing the more universal process of globalization, examining from various view points, its impact on Europe and the previous colonies. The migrations of people, the changing status of the nation - states, the spreading of western modes of production and the encounters between different cultures, and all of which are typical effects of globalization. The two dimensions of globalization are well presented: on the one hand, the spreading of Western capital and technology, and on the other, the tensions produced by the meeting of different cultures.

Postcolonial theorists regard multiculturalism as a positive concept and celebrate the border areas of cultural existence as fertile ground for creating new narrative strategies to explain ‘hybrid’ experiences. They admit that in the postcolonial period the late – capitalist mode of production depends on globalization, and not on colonial expansion.

The idea of diversity - in - one is central to Ghosh's writing. His stories concern the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of his characters. Ghosh's narrators are often from the middle or upper - middle class of Indian society, the privileged group that has had a Western education and is fluent in English (like Ghosh himself). Ghosh emphasises simultaneously on mankind's diversity and universality. Diversity refers to the different beliefs or practices applied to everyone in each cultural heritage or sphere. At the same time, universalism is a self - conscious effort to understand precisely what is common across different cultures. That is why it is said that respect for different cultures is not the antithesis of universalism, but a consequence of universalism. Ghosh's respect for different cultures and appreciation of them is evident in most of Ghosh's writing.

Ghosh as a prophet of cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism is an old concept, emerging etymologically from its roots in ancient Greece. It is generally meant as "citizenship of the world". Contemporary scholars interpret the term as helpful in expanding planetary world, offering new ways to consider actions, identities and ideas that undermine the power of well-defined social borders. In contemporary scholarship, cosmopolitanism has been used to describe the condition of exiles, refugees and strangers as well as of world travellers, elites and intellectuals. It also offers a specific way of inhabiting the transnational and transcultural currents of contemporary globalization. One of the pre - eminent English language writers of the Indian diaspora, Ghosh has come to be recognized as a literary theorist of cosmopolitanism. His career spans four continents, ranging across India, England, North Africa and United States. As an excavator and creator of cosmopolitan histories, Ghosh is shaped by the transnational circuits within which he works. Ghosh's novels actively discuss the important features of modern cosmopolitanism. He presents homes and families of his characters in a postcolonial environment as alternatives to the nations and the practices of traditional

communities. For example, his novels *The Shadow Lines* and *The Glass Palace* are centred on families. He tries to subvert the idea of national identity or allegory by focusing on families as emblems of cosmopolitan formation. He believes that writing about families is one way to oppose the militant nationalism and to support emerging cosmopolitanism.

In delineating his characters Ghosh refrains from emphasizing such separating concepts as nationality, ethnicity and race. These features may come up in background, but he does not use them as representative or definitive qualities of his characters. As Ranjita Basu notes, the “emotions and passions” of Ghosh’s characters are related more to “their universal humanity” than to their racial identity (152-153). This limited representation of racial and ethnic difference escapes the grip of Western discourses, which largely define people on the basis of their nationality, race, ethnicity or religion. But the characters in Ghosh’s novels, ethnic or racial differences are of very little consequence. In *The Circle of Reason*, for instance, we only learn that Zindi is an Egyptian towards the end of the novel. As Basu points out, “this knowledge does not help to define her in any way, for Ghosh has already defined her in a broader, more human context that transcends the boundaries between Indian and foreign.” Zindi’s nationality or race has only less significance and therefore it loses its function as a defining feature of her character.

Characters from different walks of life

As a novelist Ghosh has shown unique skill to choose a number of characters from different walks of life and to introduce them in the same background without any artificiality. Laura A. White analyses the theme, background and characters in the novel *The Hungry Tide* and has made the following observation in the concluding part of her article:

Ghosh’s representation of the interactions between the urban professional Kanai, the Indian - American scientist Piya, and the lower caste fisherman

Fokir and his progress - oriented wife, Moyna, captures the dissonance of the different, conflicting perspectives. While suggesting that these perspectives all exist together at the same time, Ghosh does not suggest that an easy combination will occur, and he does not erase the different histories and futures associated with the different ways of knowing. Additionally, Ghosh does not suggest that any of these perspectives are static and unchanged by their interaction, with each other. Instead, he uses the “broad canvas” of the novel to show how these individuals and their stories work on each other like the tides. They do not form isolated layers, but interact with one another, influencing each other’s perspective and creating new knowledge that emerges from the intersections, which like the interaction between water and land in the tidal rhythm are mutual and do not collapse differences (526) .

As a fiction writer, a journalist and a scholar, Ghosh has definite idea about a cosmopolitan world. He believes that cosmopolitanism emerges from an embrace of domesticity and kinship . He argues that people should be more committed to recognize “the world” through the home. Shameem Black of Yale University in USA has analysed the concept of home in the novel *The Shadow Lines* and made the following observation:

As a rhetoric comfortable describing psychological identities, cultural geographies, political visions, aesthetic practices and ethical principles, cosmopolitanism currently offers a powerful and sometimes contested languages for lives lived across social borders. In my reading of *The Shadow Lines*, I use the word “cosmopolitan” to connote an attitude of open engagement with unfamiliar people and places. As Ghosh’s fiction poignantly reveals, it is entirely possible to gain a wealth of transcultural experience without ever attempting to embrace others unlike oneself.

Cosmopolitanism gestures towards this ideal of sympathetic perspective - taking, which places as a positive value on an openness to unfamiliar parts of the world (47).

Once Ghosh has admitted his stance as a writer in an interview with John C. Hawley:

“A writer is also a citizen, not just of a country but of the world”. (qtd. In Hawley 11)

G.J.V Prasad has appreciated Ghosh for his cosmopolitanism like this:

Amitav Ghosh is arguably the most cosmopolitan of contemporary Indian English writers as also the most significant. His significance has its roots in his cosmopolitanism, for he is a writer who travels and remaps the world drawing connections across the boundaries of modern states (56).

Ghosh’s answer to the questions about multiculturalism and the possible direction of the new world literatures is the idea of a heterogeneous whole. He argues that literatures should not aim at “homogenizing heterogeneity”, but should aim at a world embracing hybridity that does away with context – specific differences. Tuomas Huttunen of University of Turku has analysed Ghosh’s talent as a postcolonial writer and how he has contributed to world literature in the conclusion of his article:

To sum up, then, it would seem that at the level of narrative strategy Ghosh has found as fruitful way of representing global multicultural societies and experiences. By not foregrounding nationality, ethnicity and race (even class) as definitive features of fictional characters, and by searching for representations of different social groups in ways that ensure their authentic voice and agency, he suggests how the new world literatures might diminish the clash between cultures, and conversely, avoid a homogeneous representation of multiculturalism (41-42).

Ghosh's two major concerns - his appeal for a borderless universe and his penchant for recovering lost histories - are reflected in his novel 'The Shadow Lines'. Rituparna Roy has revealed a remarkable finding in her study about the theme of *The Shadow Lines*:

On the face of it, *The Shadow Lines* has little to do with Partition. But this is to ignore the central incident of the novel - Tridib's death – which can be read as a far – reaching consequence of this long - ago event of 1947. The death of Tridib indeed indicates that the aftermath of the Partition did not die down even after seventeen years, and that even if it is a remote and quite insignificant (from a newsworthy point of view) an incident, it highlights the destructive energies of religious fundamentalism. And quite significantly, it is the remoteness and apparent political insignificance of this central incident that ironically enables the novel to make its statement all the more powerfully(114).

Ghosh's keen awareness of environment

While reading the novel *The Hungry Tide*, we immediately remember the disastrous Tsunami of December 2004, which devastated thousands of lives and decimated the homes and properties of millions of others living in the coastal communities of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and India. It is heard that Ghosh was one amongst the earliest media personalities to reach the scene of the disaster in the Andaman and Nicobar islands which was the worst afflicted Tsunami sites in India. Having witnessed the horrible sights of the calamity, he dispatched the journalistic essay, "The Town by the Sea". Originally published in *The Hindu*, an Indian newspaper, and then widely disseminated across the internet, this report has now been compiled in the collection of occasional non-fiction pieces by Ghosh, *Incendiary Circumstances* (2005).

Ghosh's essay "The Town by the Sea" has been widely appreciated as one of the incisive and ecologically sensitive overviews of the Tsunami disaster. It analyses the larger backdrop of the colonial history of the region and its indiscriminate exploitative environmental policies. Of course Ghosh has made a compassionate reporting of the disaster in his essay. More than that he sharply criticises the environmentally blind policies of habitation and development followed by the postcolonial Indian state. Neglecting the treacherous nature of the stormy seas of this region, the Indian government allocated beach-front property to mainlanders following the European model. He also points out that once the Andaman and Nicobar Islands had been one of the world's most insulated tribal populations. The essay is an excellent testimony for Ghosh's deep insight about geography, ecology, environment protection, habitation, wild life, regional plants, ruthless human exploitation of nature, etc. All these elements are more clearly discernible in his novel *The Hungry Tide*.

Ghosh presents his story in the backdrop of the Sundarbans - a vast salt-resistant mangrove forest in the Indo-Gangetic delta situated in the Bay of Bengal that lies between the borders of India and Bangladesh. The Sundarbans are a unique biotic space, a chain of islands that are constantly transformed by the daily ebb and flow of tides that create and destroy, at aberrant intervals, whole islands and eco-niches that struggle to adapt to the shifting levels of salinity in the water. Rajender Kaur has made a remarkable observation in the first part of his essay:

The Hungry Tide gestures to a new kind of postcolonial ethics, one that has transcended the Manichean perspective that defined earlier colonialist thinking. The novel moves us beyond narrow nationalistic, ethnic, and racial binaries to embrace an ecological perspective that is compelled by the understanding that we live, not in many, but in one world (127).

Ghosh's concern about the present ecosystem

Amitav Ghosh presents an entirely different theme, related with climate change and environment protection in his novel *The Hungry Tide*. He believes that global warming is more dangerous than terrorism or separatist movements in different parts of the world. He points out that every year during monsoons the sea encroaches the land and swallows a large number of people and their belongings. It is a regular phenomenon happened for thousands of kilometres on Indian shores. It is estimated that in Bengal alone, a hundred million people live within one meter of the sea. The central and state governments don't do anything substantially to defend this miserable situation. The people, victims of these disasters, don't take them seriously and they are always ready to move to the nearby emergency camps sponsored by the local administrative bodies. Ghosh laments over this situation in an interview with Mahmood Kooria:

Bengal is responsible for so much of rice production, and now, because the flow of water has changed, salt water is penetrating deeper and deeper into agricultural land. Very soon, even parts that are cultivated today will no longer be cultivatable. This has already happened in large areas of the Sunderbans. But in terms of public awareness in India, people seem to think that the only important things in the world are cricket and Bollywood. There is no awareness of the nature of the catastrophe that is approaching (16).

Jana Maria Giles has analysed aesthetics, politics and environment in the postcolonial novel *The Hungry Tide* and made the following observation in the conclusion of her article:

The Hungry Tide exemplifies Allan Stoekl's claim that the imagining of a sustainable future can only be fictional, a representation of the freedom of the other as an end rather than a means. If the Anthropocene yokes together

clashing intellectual formations, then the novel, as an artwork that provokes as a Lyotardian sublime in its audience in the gap between postcolonialism and environmentalism also incites its readers to institute new formations and idioms that have yet to exist. Ghosh sets forth a utopian hope for change that cannot be predetermined but must be evaluated “*in every single instance, in such a way as to maintain the idea of a society of free beings,*” which are the conditions for any possible justice. The postcolonial sublime refutes the ideologies of the past and spurs to witnessing and activism in partnership with those who have been rendered silent and invisible (242).

Ghosh as a postcolonial writer

Several critics and scholars have commented on the narrative style of Ghosh, especially as a postcolonial writer. Eric D. Smith’s opinion related with this, is noteworthy:

Amitav Ghosh’s *In an Antique Land* has been noted for its mercurial defiance of generic classification. Reviews and critical commentaries variously praise or condemn the book as a traveler’s tale, an (auto) ethnography, an alternative history, a polemic against modernization, the personal record of an anthropologist’s research, and, perhaps less obviously, a novel. Inasmuch as the book is generically conflicted, it is likewise ideologically conflicted, formally embodying many of the very diremptions and modern disconnections that it ostensibly confronts. Anxieties over nationalism, cultural difference, modernization, historiography, and Third World subalternity not only act as the passive objects of Ghosh’s narrative but also insinuate themselves into the very style, structure, and linguistic sensibility of the book in a manner that Bakhtin would recognize as “*novelistic*” (447).

Amitav Ghosh admits in the Author's Notes, which he attached to his novel, *The Hungry Tide*, that he got historical facts for his theme from an article, *Refugee Resettlement in Forest Reserves: West Bengal Policy Reversal and the Marichjhapi Massacre* by Ross Mallick. Lisa Fletcher observes that Ghosh uses the form of the novel to tell a history that had been largely forgotten beyond the Sundarbans. In this context, the findings of the researcher Omendra Kumar Singh are noteworthy:

Ghosh's apprehensions become apparent as he imaginatively watches the discursive space of Morichjhapi emerging with the contours of a new nation. These apprehensions can be grasped in the spatial aesthetic of the tide country which assumes distinctive importance in the novel. The geography of the tide country has been shaped in such a way as it alludes to Thomas More's New World island Utopia in his inaugural text *Utopia*, which is a representational meditation on radical difference, otherness, and the systematic nature of the social totality (247).

Robert Dixon in University of Southern Queensland in Australia has analysed Ghosh's style of writing in detail and made the following comment:

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 (5-6).

Claire Chambers of Leeds Metropolitan University in UK has appreciated Ghosh's narrative style in *The Circle of Reason* like this:

Although *The Circle of Reason* has not received as much critical attention as Ghosh's other works, the novel evinces an important distinguishing

characteristic of Ghosh's fiction to date: his heterogeneous use of genre. Despite its limitations, this lively first novel demonstrates his eclectic interaction with ideas from both East and West and his ability to create a composite generic framework in which to discuss these ideas (34).

Ghosh has clear strategy to put forward the Oriental thought as an alternative to the Western and it is visibly seen in his work *The Calcutta Chromosome*. James H. Thrall has mentioned this talent in one of his articles:

With its mingling of medicine and mysticism, Ghosh's counter-science is thus not the opposite of Western science as Orientalism's irrational superstition, nor is it that science itself precisely, but something like its mirror image writ large, if that distinction makes sense. It is a form of rational inquiry of an entirely different order, Eastern rather than Western in orientation, with goals commensurately more vast, and independent from limited perspectives that can accomplish only what is perceived as possible(301).

Sujala Singh has appreciated the skill of Ghosh for mixing fiction and non-fiction in writing in her essay like this:

His first two novels, *The Circle of Reason* and *The Shadow Lines*, deploy the researcher figure more covertly and their authority within the narrative is curtailed. I have already shown how, in *Circle*, the eccentric Balaram interprets and lives in the world according to notions of Pasteurian idealism and teaches his young orphaned nephew to do the same. The romantic Tridib in *The Shadow Lines* opens up the cartographies of the globe through the *Bartholomew's Atlas* for the young narrator. The mix of fiction and non-fiction provides a status of authority of Ghosh's texts as 'real' genealogies,

histories and manuscripts are laid out for us. The quest is as much for the responsible, politically correct, engaged researcher as for the alternative stories of globalisation that the researcher (who is usually male) unravels and interprets for us (57).

Ghosh's experience as a writer

Ghosh has pursued a number of professions, moving seamlessly between work as anthropologist, journalist, professor and novelist. Pico Iyer analyses Ghosh's experience as a writer like this:

What this means in practice is that Ghosh has one foot in the comfortable upper-middle-class Bengali world we know from Satyajit Ray movies..... and the other among the displaced peoples of the world, whose sufferings and split identities he has chronicled in reportorial works distinguished for their social conscience and compassion.

Scott McClintock appreciates Ghosh's skill to connect global networks in his essay like this: "Ghosh's fictionalization of the global networks joining Indian and Irish insurgencies recounts a narrative this is increasingly, drawing the interest of historians as well" (17).

The themes and their presentations in Ghosh's novels are really amazing. It is pointed out that he does not imitate any other English writer. Instead he follows his own style boldly and this attitude has made his works outstanding. Yumna Siddiqi analyses the novel *The Circle of Reason* in detail and finds out how it is different from other detective stories. She writes in her conclusion:

As a story of intrigue, *The Circle of Reason* works against the conventions of classic detective fiction in a number of ways. For one, Ghosh gives the

detective only a subsidiary part in the narrative. From the outset, Ghosh's detective has been a reluctant sleuth, and has felt little appetite for the chase. In the course of an interrogation, when he was expected to brutalize a witness, he felt the bile churn at the back of his throat, experiencing a visceral horror for the state's repressive tactics that we, as readers, share. Also, *The Circle of Reason* jettisons the type of closure characteristic of the genre of intrigue. Well before the end of the novel, Das abandons his duties as a police detective. In the final passages, the detective and the remaining characters disperse in what is described as a beginning rather than an ending. By constructing the detective's character and role in this way, Ghosh diverts his burlesque of police fiction of the gratifications of heroic detection (202).

Ghosh's heavy risks taken in advance for writing his novels

Amitav Ghosh has revealed the pain and trouble to write the *The Glass Palace* in an interview with Frederick Luis Aldama:

The Glass Palace was like an odyssey, you know ? It took months and months of very organized travel, because I realized at some point that my book was “about much more than just individual characters. It was also about the history of the Indian diaspora in Southeast Asia, which is an epic history, a very extraordinary history. I realized that the only way I could learn about this was really by talking to people. So I traveled to Malaysia, literally going from compound to compound, finding people who lived through this time, talking to them about the past. I traveled in Burma. I traveled in India. I traveled in Thailand. I traveled on the Burmese/Thai border. I spent time with the insurgents

who are fighting the Burmese Army. I went into the jungle with them. I was shot at by the Burmese Army, which was quite an experience (88-89).

Christopher A. Shinn of Georgetown University has made a remarkable comment in the introduction of his essay 'On Machines and Mosquitoes: Neuroscience, Bodies, and Cyborgs in Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome*:

Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fevers, Delirium and Discovery* (1995) traces the hidden dangers of modern science, exposing the constant threats that surround a futuristic world of new technology and postcolonial cybernetic warfare. The book magnifies concerns about the power of advanced technology to absorb into its fateful design all the nightmarish horrors that surround the spread of global terrorism, crime, disease, war, and empires (145).

Ghosh's positive and negative utopian thinking

Ghosh has always tried to balance positive and negative utopian thinking in his portrayals. The narration about the Morningside Rubber Estate in *The Glass Palace* is a good example to this aspect. John J. Su of Marquette University has observed Ghosh's this style and commented like this:

In *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh attempts to render both positive and negative utopian thinking within the aesthetic form of the novel, such that the two modes of thinking mutually correct each other. The portrayals of the Burmese Queen, the Collector and Arjun emphasize the inescapable dangers of utopian thinking and emphasize that Dinu's vision of people engaged in distinterested debate is a heuristic rather than a reality. *The Glass Palace* proposes the

conditions under which individuals are invited to engage with each other in ways that respect potentially intractable differences, and Arjun's inability ever to escape from his own biases reminds readers that such conditions are rarely, if ever, met (77).

Significance of this research

This research has been an attempt to define the term 'Indianness' and its various implications from different perspectives. It is admitted in the beginning of the introductory chapter that the term cannot be conceptualized into a single definition. Comparing to other countries India's socio-cultural heritage, racial problems, religious differences, language diversity, issues connected with rural and urban backgrounds, etc. are more complex and complicated. Therefore it is seen that there are a large number of interpretations to the term 'Indianness'. It is reflected in almost all the genres of Indian writing in English. As it reflects the religious beliefs, practices, philosophy of the common people, love and married life, food habits, dress code, family life and the lifestyle of an average Indian, the writers need a wide canvass to describe what they see around themselves. Indianness has been analysed in Indian English poetry, prose, short story, drama and novel. In this thesis more importance has been given to novels in Indian English.

The study of Indianness in Indian Writing in English is significant or useful not only to Indians but to people all over the world. This research has analysed the various aspects of Indianess in Indian Writing in English related with social, political, historical, economic, religious, geographical and cultural aspects of people living in India and abroad. It is true that some of our problems are connected with living in India. At the same time, a few others are common to humanity and in that sense they are universal. Several Indian English writers are highly skilful in focusing the diverse problems and suggesting solutions to them directly and

indirectly through their works. It is a fact that historians and critics, especially belonging to western culture, view Indian way of living as an inferior one comparing to other world cultures. They do not try to find out the merits and achievements of our civilization. This research is not an attempt to glorify the Indian culture and civilization. On the contrary, it reviews the diverse elements in the Indian way of thinking and living. Though Ghosh plays a neutral role in his narrative, he doesn't overlook the evil aspects of our social life. He suggests possible solutions to those defects using sublime imagination. Whereas he highlights the greatness of family life in India and it is an integral part of our culture.

Observations made in this research

After examining the meaning of the term Indianness, it studies briefly the evolution of Indian writing in English. This study identifies the beginning of the Indian writing in English, observes the charges against Indian English literature and points out its significance in the literary scene all over the world. As this research has chosen fiction for detailed study, it analyses closely the three stages in the growth and development of Indian English fiction. In order to find out and compare the various elements of Indianness, Amitav Ghosh has been selected as an ideal novelist for an in-depth study. His novels cover almost all traits of Indian way of thinking and living. The introductory chapter concludes with brief summaries of his six selected novels: *The Circle of Reason*, *The Shadow Lines*, *The Calcutta Chromosome*, *The Glass Palace*, *The Hungry Tide* and *Sea of Poppies*.

The second chapter analyses the different aspects of Indianness connected with the social conditions in India. It highlights how the caste system and untouchability have influenced negatively the goodness of our ancient civilization. The novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Ruth Praver Jhabwala and Arundhati Roy had raised their voice against these inhuman practices prevailed in our society through their works. This research

admits that these two age-old social evils cannot be rooted out completely even in his post independent era. They still continue in our society in one form or another.

Having made a general evaluation regarding the caste system and untouchability in Indian social scenario, this research estimates how Ghosh reacts to these things. He narrates a few real scenes taken place based on caste system during the 19th century in the first few chapters of his novel *Sea of Poppies*. Though he has depicted the scenes in a remote village of Bihar, we painfully realise that these are not isolated things in north India. The upper caste Hindus regarded the untouchables as equal to animals. The three landlords in Ghazipur village humiliated Kalua, an untouchable, at first mating him with a well-known prostitute and later they forced him to mate with a large black mare. Even in the schooner *Ibis* the upper caste Hindus followed the same system that prevailed on the land. The colonial people didn't find anything wrong in pursuing such callous things even in their ship.

Along with caste system and untouchability, another cruel aspect of our social system is the miserable plight borne by Hindu widows. For a long time, they were forced to perform sati. Due to the strong interference of religious reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, etc. this cruel system was almost eliminated. But the physical situation for a widow to lead a free life has not been improved. She has to be tonsured and forbidden from remarriage. She cannot put on dress as she likes but she has to wear only white dress always. The white sari is not meant to give her any respect but to discriminate her as 'cursed' widow in the community. Widowhood in Hinduism has been analysed and estimated how Ghosh has reacted to such practices prevailing in India. Under this subtitle it has been scrutinized whether Ghosh has risen to the level of a reformer as a writer.

Having analysed caste system, untouchability and widowhood in Hinduism, the other two important aspects like love and marriage in India are examined and compared them in the novels of Ghosh. It has to be started with observing man – woman relationship in Indian society. Most of the communities in India are patriarchal by nature and therefore major decisions in family are always taken by men. It is true that after independence the fate of women has been improved a lot due to a general progressive vision of the society. The widespread education among girls, the right to universal franchise, employment opportunities for women, etc. have helped women in securing and enjoying more freedom in family and society. The writers have depicted well the changes taken place in man-woman relationship associated with love and marriage in their works. Ghosh has presented a variety of love affairs and married life in his novels. While we evaluate the affairs and married life of his characters, it seems that he stands for a new cosmopolitan society irrespective of caste, region, religion, nation, etc. This new vision in writing makes him a unique postcolonial writer.

In *The Shadow Lines*, Tridib a young Indian youth falls in love with May Price an English girl who was born and brought up in London. Similarly, Ila the young Indian girl gets attracted to Nick Price, an English boy. The difference in nationhood does not become a hindrance to their affairs. In *The Glass Palace* Rajkumar, the protagonist who is an Indian marries Dolly, a Burmese girl. Similarly the First Princess of the Burmese Royal family gets married with Mohan Sawant who is an Indian and coachman at Ratnagiri. The Second Princess eloped with a Burmese commoner and hid herself in the Residency. Neel, the son of Rajkumar and Dolly, was born and brought up in Burma but he married Manju, the sister of Arjun, who was a typical Calcutta girl. Matthew, the only son of Saya John, falls in love with an American lady namely Elsa Hoffman. In *Sea of Poppies* Kalua, an untouchable rescues Deeti, an upper class Rajaputhra woman, from her funeral pyre and later marries her.

Ghosh always dreams of a new world where all youth can love and marry whoever he or she likes. The other social elements like region, religion, language, caste, financial status, nobility, etc. should not be obstacles to free love. We regretfully realize that love and marriage in Indian social conditions are often degraded to the level of a kind of trade agreement. At times marriage is arranged not for the merging of two minds, hearts and bodies but for protecting the family's prestige and good will. Ghosh always upholds the ideals of divine love and in this sense, he can be called as the 'prophet of love' to the 21st century.

The other factors connected with Indian social conditions like male domination in the society and status of women in the Indian family and society are also discussed in general and how they are reflected in Ghosh's novels. In addition to this, a few more peculiarities of Indian people are pointed out in this chapter: for example, Indian women's love for jewellery, importance of Hindi film songs, centrality of cricket in Indian psyche, etc.

The important historical and political events in pre and post independent India are discussed briefly and how Indian English writers have presented those incidents in their works. In this section the contrast in the attitude of the earlier writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, etc. and post independent writers like Khushwant Singh, Amitav Ghosh, etc. towards Gandhism and the Partition is highlighted. In *The Glass Palace* Uma Dey the freedom activist, explains the basis of the difference in opinion between Gandhi and Subhash Candra Bose in supporting and opposing the British Empire during the Second World War. Ghosh deals with these historical and political facts in an excellent way connecting them with his fictional characters. In this chapter it is found out how Ghosh has designed his plot and linked it with history. He has admitted in one of his interviews that *The Glass Palace* is based on the military career of his father and uncle's life as a trader in Burma.

In Chapter III the religious and economic aspects of Indian society are highlighted and it is seen that Ghosh gives more importance to economic aspects of Indians in his novels. This chapter also deals with the different economic conditions of India, how the colonial rulers have exploited India's agricultural sector for making huge profits by compelling them to change to poppy cultivation. They discouraged all types of farming connected with food items. It was the beginning of food problem in India. Besides, they started different types of factories all over India and attracted people from rural areas to work in those factories for low wages. In addition to low wages, the working conditions in those huge factories are quite pathetic. The Ghazipur Opium Factory in *Sea of Poppies* substantiates Ghosh's argument.

The colonial people needed cheap labour for their plantations in Malay and other British colonies. They arranged agents to recruit poor people by giving attractive offers and to reach them in Calcutta. From there they were transported to their colonies. Rajkumar Raha in *The Glass Palace* and Nob Kissin Baboo in *Sea of Poppies* are good examples for such recruiting agents. This type of recruitment has helped much Rajkumar to become a timber merchant in Burma later. Till the advent of the British in Burma the teaks in their forests have remained evergreen. Soon they identified the worth of the teak, cut them off in large numbers and shipped them to London. The timber yards in the forests have become a common sight during this period.

Similarly they observed that the Burmese people were using the strong and obedient elephants only as symbols for power and glory, especially in palaces and other places of worship. Soon they trained mahouts for dragging logs by elephants to the nearby ports in order to ship them out. Besides they taught the coolies to drag logs through rivers to the ports. In Malay they found that its soil and climate are really suitable for the cultivation of rubber. They called it rhetorically as 'money plant'. They discouraged all other crops in Malay and started rubber plantations everywhere. Ghosh has done a brilliant task in revealing all these

ruthless activities through his fictional plot and characters. It is a shocking discovery that the colonial people have exploited land, forests, nature, rivers, animals in addition to human beings.

The chapter IV analyses the different geographical features of india. The background of rivers and seas in Indian English novels are analysed in general and how Ghosh has depicted them in his novels. He has described the speciality of Bengal tide in *Sea of Poppies* and suggests that it is a strange phenomenon. He explains the important places like Madras, Ratnagiri, Calcutta, etc. with minute details.

The chapter V is an assessment on type characters in Indian English novels. It is also elucidated that Ghosh has produced a few stereotype characters like his predecessors. Chapter VI is an exclusive view on Indian English. Ghosh has contributed much to Indian English and it is discussed in detail how he is different from other English writers. Comparing to other Indian English writers, he has commendable fluency and vocabulary in English language. He has shown great confidence in a foreign language and proved his talent brilliantly.

Scope of this research

This research work can open up new approaches towards the study of Indianness in Indian Writing in English. Indianness being a vast and complex term, it is not possible to include all elements related with it in a single project. As India is one of the ancient civilizatoms of the world, the study of Indianness should have been started with elaborate analysis of the essence of our *vedas* and *puranas*. They still influence considerably the present life of people in India. In this research Indianness is analysed from a general point of view. In this project as a case study for Indianness, six novels of Amitav Ghosh have been selected. The other writers have done meritorious service to present Indianness in their works. The observations and conclusions made in this research on behalf of Indianness and

its depiction in Ghosh's novels will pave the way for further researches in the same sphere. Such findings will be helpful to correct the degraded impression and attitude of writers, historians and critics, especially of Western culture and civilization. This research will be highly useful for students community to analyse and review the books prescribed in Indian Writing in English. It has clearly explained the diverse Indian elements connected with social, political, historical, religious, economic, geographical and cultural aspects. It has also studied in detail great works of other eminent writers.

Finally, it seems that this project has done maximum justice in analysing the different characteristics of Indianness in Indian Writing in English. It has assessed the contribution of the leading writers in each aspect and pointed out how they are reflected in Ghosh's novels. The themes of his novels are varied and strategies to present ideas in each work are also different. There is no exaggeration in saying that Ghosh has made unique contribution to Indian writing in English and he can make further if he maintains his talent more intelligently and cunningly. This project can be concluded with the general comment on India and Indianness: "India is a nation state but Indianness is a not a homogeneous term".