Chapter II

An Overview of Post 80s Indian Fiction

Several literary, cultural, historical and political factors have been responsible for the rise of the 'new' novel which has now come of age. It has travelled a long way before attaining its present form. It gained ground from l981 onward, when the novelist sought to employ this genre as a medium to present a meaningful vision of life.

The nineteen eighties marked the decline of general people's interest in the Raj. The younger generation of writers began to think of the predicament of the commons. 'In the domain of literature, the life and activities of the marginalized sections of society became prominent areas of study. After women and blacks, the colonies became the focus of the writer's attention. Post-colonial studies grew very fast and the writers developed interest in the third world. Quite a few young, talented Indian English writers were agreeably surprised to find that their work found ready acceptance from well - known publishers of the West. This gave them impetus to create more literature of this kind. M.K. Naik and Shyamala A. Narayan (2001) maintain that "This was a further incentive for the better writers of the new generation to bring fresh perspectives to bear on their experience of India, the west and the world".(17). Evidently, it was the twilight of the established tendencies of fiction writing and the beginning of the "new" fiction. The career of the writers of the older generation namely Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Bhabani Bhattacharya seemed to have come to an end. However, G.V. Desani who

also belonged to the generation of old fiction writers remained a living presence in the 'new' fiction. Manohar Malagonkar, Khushwant Singh, K.A. Abbas, Arun Joshi, Chaman Nahal, Timeri Murari, Victor Anant, Ahmed Ali, Shiv K. Kumar etc. supplied the readers with an enviable variety of themes with a substantially meaningful reading of life. To some extent, the novelists namely Raj Gill, Vasant A. Shahne, Pratap Sharma, Gurucharan Das, Manoj Das, Gopal Gandhi, Rafique Zakaria, Murli Das Melwani, S. Gidwani and Romen Basu have contributed to the development of the 'new' fiction and they still continue to be active, though, by and large, their best days seem to be behind them.

It may be admitted that the champions of the 'new' fiction have mostly been a part of the Indian diaspora. They lived for brief or long periods in West. They used English almost like a mother tongue. However, the best of them continue to have strong roots in India. So, they remain true to the kindred points of India and the West. Significant modern, western literary movements like post - modernism and magic realism influenced them greatly. As a result of this, they began to twist the direction of the existing trends of fiction. M.K Naik and Shyamala A. Narayan hold that exactly this kind of situation produced novels like Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children*.

Salman Rushdie ushered a new era of Indian writing in English. The appearance of his *Midnight's Children* (1981) brought about a renaissance in the domain of literature. Its influence, acknowledged by critics and novelists alike, has been apparent in numerous ways. It marks the beginning of the novel of magic realism. Subsequently, its pattern was followed by other writers too. Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* (1986), Boman Desai's *The Memory of Elephants* (1988), Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian* (1989), Farukh Dhondy's *Bombay*

Buck (1990), G. J. V. Prasad's *A Clean Breast* (1993), Mukui Kesavan's *Looking Through Glass* (1995), Vikram Chandra's *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995), Makarand Paranjape's *The,Narrator* (1995), Kiran Nagakar's *Ravan and Eddie* (1995), Tabish Khair's *An Angel in Payjamas* (1996), Indrajit Hazra's *The Burnt Forehead of Man Soul* (2000), Ranjit Lai's *The Cow Chronicles* and Ranbir Khare's *The Last Jungle on Earth* (2000) belong to the category of the novels of magic realism. Surprisingly enough, most of these writers were the product of Delhi's St. Stephen's College. The theme of each of these novels is almost similar. *A.K. Mehrotra (2000)* remarks that "The allegorical parallel of the growth and the maturity of the individual, and the growth of an independent India is a recurrent feature in many novels of the period (323).

Among many Indian writers writing in English today, Amitav Ghosh's name carries a distinctive reputation. He is acclaimed as one who has put the cultural dialogics of India on the map of the world and has made the diversities of his country recognized for their inherent socio-historical relevance. His fictional range is truly astounding and what is even more noteworthy is that in an age obsessively preoccupied with the depressingly black, with trauma and amongst, with fragmentation and chaos, he is able to validate our life, give it a purpose and look at the brighter side of things. This is, perhaps, because he has imbibed the essence of the orient and has the will and the creative power to fight back all dislocations that have tried their most to undermine our stability. Thus, what emerges very clearly from his writing is how one can negotiate by assimilation and traverse the uneven terrain of our times, learning from the past and forging a valourising future.

Born in Calcutta in 1956, Ghosh grew in East Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Iran and India. He was a student at the Doon school, Dehra Dun and then moved on to do his graduation from St. Stephen's college and his post graduation from Delhi university in 1976. This was a time when India was in the high noon of nationalist self confidence which was rubbed on to him indelibly. Thence began his gaining of experience that helped to forge a world class mindset. He did a diploma in Arabic from the institute Bourguiba de Langues Virantes in Tunis in 1979, a D Phil in social anthropology from Oxford University in 1952 and while working towards his doctoral research at the university of Alexandra, he visited Lataifa for field work. Ghosh did a stint of journalism with Indian Express and moved on to academic positions at Delhi University, Columbia university and Queens College New York where he was a distinguished professor. He has travelled widely and been a visiting professor at the university of Virginia, Pennsylrain, American university Cairo and Harvard. He is married to Deborah Baker a writer and editor at Little Brown and Corporations. He has acted as visiting fellow and professor in several universities around the world and has produced a bulk of writing including seven major novels and a large amount of journalism and cultural-political commentary in form of articles and essays.

Ghosh has received many awards for his works. *The Circle of Reason* won the Prix Medici Estranger, one of the France's top literary awards and *The Shadow Lines* won the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Ananda Purskar. *The Calcutta Chromosome* won the Arthur C. Clarke Award for 1997 and *The Glass Palace* won the grand prize for fiction at the Frankfurt International e-Book Awards in 2001. The Pushcart (an award given for stories, poems and essays published in a literary magazine in the U.S) was awarded for his essay, *The March of the Novel through*

History: My Father's Bookcase. When The *Glass Palace* was nominated for a Commonwealth Prize, Ghosh famously withdrew the book from consideration, citing not only his unwillingness to participate in the Prize's selective memorialization of empire but also in its privileging English to the exclusion of many languages that sustain the cultural and literary lives of formerly colonized nations. *The Hungry Tide* won the Hutch Crossword Book Prize in 2006. In 2007, Amitav Ghosh was awarded the Grinzane Canour prize in Turin, Italy. Ghosh's recently published book, *The Sea of Poppies* has received the Booker Prize for the compelling story told against an epic historical canvas, its deft use of diverse tongues and a memorable cast of characters.

This anthropologist turned writer, writing in the post-colonial era, bringing together experiences from various parts of the world, different classes and ethnicities is bound to dwell largely on the dialogics of spacio - temporality. His anthropology background makes him delve deep and excavate the past, his wide travels make him encounter different spaces and so when he writes there is both a unique intersection of these two nexuses and an interface between them that gives his fiction a flavor rarely found. From re-mapping lost worlds, to negotiating between different parts of the world, from illusions of reality to lived reality, the net is thrown wide but the depths plumbed are deep as well. And most importantly he aims at enhancing cultural identity and projecting historical heritage alongside of seeking out histories of belonging to encounter those common grounds that have been erased from our awareness in a world stressed with differences.

The present study explores Ghosh's fictional and non-fictional writings to attest to the fact that Ghosh travels across geographical and temporal boundaries be they interior or exterior mapppings of the two tropes. Moreover, his positioning as

a diasporic postcolonial writer makes it necessary to also examine his work in conjuction with theoretical paradigms of socio-cultural politics of identify formation and self-actualization in a multilayered world. Right from his first novel, *The Circle of Reason,* Ghosh travels from the epic scape of *The Mahabharata* to the present day world, from the space of gods and goddesses to 'battery operated' twentieth century temporality and all this is for Algerian Colleagues.

Mrs. Verma suggests an enactment of the story of Chitrangada from the Hindu epic *Mahabharata* for hers and Dr. Mishra's Algerian colleagues. The version she has in mind is Rabindranath Tagore's dance drama based on the story in the epic, written in Bengali and translated by Mrs. Verma's father into Hindi. Since the Algerian audience would not understand either Hindi or Bengali the scenes to be performed are to be explained through a translator. From Sanskrit, the source language of the story in the epic to the target language French, Chitrangada travels through Bengali and Hindi versions. The enacted version is a translation of sorts for in it mythology becomes kitsch: Dr. Mishra dressed as Madana, the God of Love, wears a "battery operated halo" which makes an irritating whirring noise and Kulfi, the lead actress playing Chitrangada, dons a "zari spangled sari."

Such a transcreation of mythology, its transmission to another location and its subsequent decontextualisation can be taken as an instance of what Arjun Appadurai (1990) has described as culture becoming "an arena for conscious choice, justification, and representation, the latter often to multiple, and spatially dislocated audiences" (335). In his cultural study of immigration Appadurai's basic unit is the imagination which is defined not only in terms of work, "both in the sense of labor and culturally organized practice," but also in terms of negotiation

between "sites of agency ('individuals') and globally defined fields of possibility" (327). For Ghosh (2002) in *The Imam and the India*:

> The past, as Faulkner famously said, is not over, in fact the past is not even the past. One of the paradoxes of history is that it is impossible to draw a chart of the past without imagining a map of the present and future. History, in other words, is never innocent of teleologies, implicit or otherwise...the actions of the state provide that essential element of continuity that makes time, as a collective experience, thinkable by linking the past, the present and the future. The state as thus conceived is not merely an apparatus of rule but ʿa conscious, ethical institution, 'an instrument designed to conquer the 'unhistorical power of time'. (318-319)

With the advent of postmodernism and deconstruction, history as the History was not only challenged but replaced, renegotiated and revised. There is an endlessness of openness and impossibility of closure in his discourse.

History is again a 'story' of people of particular time in past. The authenticity of these documentations is always under skeptical criticism. We know what happened during an event but know it partially, as it tends to generalize and bring in the major threads of the fabric. Even generalized statements about such events overlook and the victims or the people who suffer because of such events, they get quantified and get reduced to numbers. For example, we say that 50,000 Jews were killed during Nazi regime, we just know the numbers not the lives. Here is an endeavour by Ghosh to imagine and create those situations from history and see what happens to an individual life when he/she is part of historical events. The focus is shifted to what history does not say. This gap of what is not being said

becomes the foreground for practical imagination for some of the authors like Amitav Ghosh who continuously through fiction and non-fiction endevour to establish a link between the past and the present. His canvass is filled with an amazing merger of real and fiction from history and present.

History also records the changes and chronology of events. Literature need not necessarily record the changes in chronological manner but represents such changes. Ghosh represents the changes that take place at individual level and at national and international levels. Thus, his representation encompasses both micro and macro levels. He uses the mirror of time to reflect images of changing times.

Here it would be appropriate to examplify Ghosh's own stand. Reflecting on the connection between his memories and its evolution into fictions Ghosh says:

> *The Circle of Reason* had grown upwards, like a sapling rising from the soil of my immediate experience; The Shadow Lines had its opening planted in present, but it grew downwards, into the soil, like a root system straining to find a source of nourishment. It was in this process that I came to examine the ways in which my own life had been affected by civil violence. I remembered stories my mother had told me about the Great Calcutta Killing of 1946; I remembered my uncle's stories of anti-Indian riots in Rangoon in 1930 and 1938. At the heart of the book, however, was an event that had occurred in Dhaka in 1964, the year before my family moved to Colombo: in the unlit depths of my memory there stirred a recollection of a night when our house , flooded with refugees, was besieged by an angry mob. I had not thought of this event in decades, but after 1984 it began to haunt me... I went to libraries

and sifted through hundreds of newspapers and in the end, through
perseverance, luck and guesswork I did find out what had happened.
The riots of my memory were not local affair: they had engulfed
much of the subcontinent. (Ghosh, 2002: 315)

Again Ghosh has expressed his own view on his concentration on history in
the following words:

My essential interest is in people and their lives, histories and their
predicaments. If history is of interest to me it is because it provides
instances of unusual and extraordinary predicaments. For instance,
take Arjun at the battle of Jitra (The Glass Palace): his life is
brought to crisis by a historical circumstance. He shares this
circumstance with many others, but he responds to it in a fashion
that is particular to himself. This crisis is more dramatic than any I
could have thought up on my own, and that is why it is so rewarding
to look at history carefully. (Hawley 6)

Historical events are intrinsic part of Ghosh's oeuvre. He dwells into the
history of the subjects in his fictional as well as non-fictional works. He scrutinizes
present turmoil as a result of past. He also examines the influence of past on
present and reveals the predicament of individuals who are subjected to the events
of history, individuals who do not appear in the spectrum of history but the ones
whose life underwent a complete transformation because of the larger political,
social and national upheavals. Continuing with his style, he equates both the
present and past of Burma. Two pasts of Cambodia too, are being juxtaposed in
this account: one distant past filled with glory and glamour , immediate past

destructive, disturbing present. While describing historical visit, he uses the newspaper report to authenticate his picture.

He focuses more on the personal lives against the backdrop of massive historical sweeps such as wars and riots , the downfall and exploitation of Burma in which also includes world war and the subject nations during these devastating years, Afeen Wars , the suffering before, after and during, Pol Pot's regime, specially the wreckage caused by Khemer Rouge movement and military rule and fragmentation of Burma in the twentieth century, the violence and destruction in Sri Lanka, Mughal king Babur's life and time, the history and politics involved in the announcement of literary awards to non western authors.

Ghosh sets the stage, peoples it with fascinating characters, and then rather broadly interprets the play as paradigmatic of similar events throughout history. As Ghosh recounts his tale of past events, he takes us to the time in which he personally enters the historical chain of events. His interest in history and a rich mixture of facts and fiction are so intense that the reader visits and revisits the places and events. Meenakshi Mukherjee sums up her appreciation for his skilled representation of the past in following words: "Other histories and other geographies come alive and align with our own through Ghosh's transculent prose." (qtd. from Hawley 6).

One important aspect of history is evolution of human beings through science and technology. *The Calcutta Chromosome* talks about history of research on Malaria, *The Circle of Reason* talks about history of phrenology in a rather tongue in cheek manner, *The Hungry Tide* narrates the history of scientific study on Irrawaddy Dolphin in South Asia. As a literary writer, he used his licenses to explore historical events on the lines of possibilities and probabilities.

Ghosh engages personal reminiscence to replicate the workings of memory in 'remembered' histories. He focuses on memory of public events in private memory, which colours and distorts them in accordance with personal biases and priorities. It is used by Ghosh to call attention to the selective nature of recorded history of Indian nationalism and exclusion of all that was not in line with mainstream narrative. The story of grandmother in *The Shadow Lines* about her classmate, who was an active member of an extremist group stand for the unsung freedom fighters who chose the other path for freedom fighting.

The novel relates the story of a Calcutta-based Indian family and their relationship with the English Prices, which started in colonial times in India and survives through World War II and the Partition up to the 1980s. It is then that the unnamed narrator finally arrives in London, and for the first time in his life accesses the physical reality of the city that had only been formed in his mind as an imaginary construction nurtured by his uncle Tridib's recollections of the time he spent there when he had been put up by the Prices in the months immediately preceding World War II.

On his arrival in the metropolis, he is immediately haunted by a longing to know London "in her finest hour" (57), to be transported to pre-World War II London to relieve the frustration that he experiences when he realises that his perception of the metropolis will never correspond to that of Tridib's. As Brinda Bose noted, "in Ghosh's fiction, the diasporic entity continuously negotiates between two lands, separated by both time and space —history and geography— and attempts to redefine the present through a nuanced understanding of the past". (235) Through a rather Bhabhaesque interpretation of the novel, she describes *The Shadow Lines* a "metajourney" that takes the protagonist "into that third space

where boundaries are blurred and cultures collide" (239). It is within that hybrid context in which the narrator is immersed in London that he is finally confirmed in his refusal to accept any truth as definitive. Here the concept of imagination is understood as an equivalent to independence from ideological positions of any kind, whether they come from the colonial Centre or any other figure of authority. Furthermore, it represents the choice to configure the individual's vision of the world according to a selective and creative use of perception that is operated by multiple others and not imposed from an omniscient Self.

In the context of the ideological bases that sustain nationalism, Ghosh also reappropriates imagination so as to contest the fiction of "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991) in which the nation is rooted. Thus, attempting a balanced portrayal of the agitated backdrop of pre-Partition India in which the novel is partly framed, Ghosh constructs the character of Tlramma, the narrator's grandmother, who acts as a foil to Tridib and his nephew's endeavours: Th'amma's own personal vision of the nation is constructed on war and bloodshed.

Th'amma's conceptual mapping of the nation, which mirrors that of nationalism, is based upon the unifying effects of "Tradition" —represented in her mind under the guise of warfare— that constitutes the main ingredient of a country's territorial integrity?

As a counterpoint to this, the narrator's voice is crucial for recovering the lost pieces of history that have slipped through the cracks of this selective nationalistic memory. Through his research in the faculty library, Tridilys nephew reasserts himself as a deserving heir to his uncle's memory, tracing back the connections between the riots that he witnessed as a child in Calcutta and the communal attacks in Dhaka which cost Tridib his life back in 1964. This turning

point in the novel exemplifies the power of the individual's use of imagination, oriented towards the establishing of connections beyond the rigidity of ideological constructs already institutionalised, an effort that runs counter to any political efforts to construct a selective national history to serve the purpose of nationalism. In this way, Ghosh contributes with *The Shadow Lines to* the tradition of the "counter-narratives of the nation" that, according to Homi Bhabha (1990) "continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries" and "disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities" (300).

The Shadow Lines covers two major historical events , one the World War II in distant past from the time the novel is situated and second is the communal riots in 1984. The backdrop of the bombings in world war is not so much explored as the event of communal riots in 1984. This event is a very important point in the plot of the novel as Tridib is killed by an angry mob .The novel also sketches an individual's memories during the historical period of growing Indian nationalism through grandmother's stories of her youth. The events like partition, riots which became events of national trauma are brought to us as experiences of individuals who lived through them or suffered through these events. He says, "I was determined now that I would not let my past vanish without a trace; I was determined to persuade (others) of its importance" (Ghosh 217).

The Shadow Lines continuously revolves around partition, riots and flittingly refers to the World War II. *The Calcutta Chromosome* is anchored on the history of malaria research in India. *The Glass Palace* captures events of British invasion on Burma, partition and the great exodus. *The Hungry Tide* refers to the history of settlement in Sundarbans and Sir Daniel Hamilton's intervention in it.

In An Antique Land is a book based on Amitav Ghosh's research on twelfth century merchant Abrahim Ben Yiju and his servant Bomma simultaneously narrating the author's experiences at Egypt while conducting the investigation for the research. It was in 1978 when Amitav Ghosh chanced upon the letters that referred to the master and the slave of twelfth century. The first of these letters was written in 1148 in Aden, by a person named Khalaf in Ishaq. The letter reveals that Ben Yiju lived in south India at Mangalore to be precise, at that point of time. This time is also remarkable from the point of world history as it was the same time when Damascus was encircled by a large army of crusaders. The slave of the letters was not mentioned until the same letters came to the notice of the scholars, ironically these letters were written nine years earlier than the first letter that triggered attention from the scholars like E. Strauss. Various papers of Ben Yiju, a Jewish merchant from Tunisia were discovered centuries later in a synagogue in Cairo. His slave is described as Ben Yiju's Indian slave who was also a respected member of his household. This sets the premise for the various possible threads of histories Ghosh weaves in his stories and demonstrates a pattern in which the past gets connected to the present. He engages himself with the history of people and the place they belong to.

History of a place is always filled in with people's stories. The versions of these stories may differ but the crux of these stories reveals a place's growth and its people's long journey with time. It also indicates the intricate relationship of their past with their present condition. He narrates the history of old Cairo in *In An Antique Land.* He begins with the etymology of the original name 'Masr' which means 'to settle' or 'to civilise' and then shows us the transformation of the word Miisr to Egypt. With this linguistic evolution and transformation of the word, we

are also acquainted with the fact and manner in which Egypt has been described, perceived and represented by Christian Europe.

While describing Babylon, he goes back to history which also reveals various stories / theories about the name of the place. Looking at the desolate condition of the fortress he says,

> Incredible as it may seem, this putrefying pit marks the site of what was perhaps the single most important event in the history of Cairo, indeed of Egypt; it was thought to have effected his entry into Babylon in 641 AD - the decisive event in the Fustat, the Muslim victory over the Christian powers Masr. (35)

The legend of Amr, the invasion by Jawahar the Greek in 969 AD , stories about the foundation of the township of al-Qahira, medieval Fustat ,the glorious time during the Fatimid Empire, the present state of ruins of Babylon and Fustat all demonstrate a history of decay and regeneration " of Masr. Thus, we know about the glorious past of place that lies in ruins. The rubbish dump of Fustat, like many other places across the world stands as a representative of the fact that the cultures move on and the very places that were the locus of a particular civilization loses its glory and sheen with time.

In the novel *The Calcutta Chromosome,* Amitav Ghosh tries to establish that the existing modes of thought and belief are dangerous to human life. The novel seems to capture and interweave into its fabric accurately the chaos and the violence of everyday life. It relates them clearly to the inner realities of human existence. It also puts forward the paradox that life finds sustenance through secrecy and silence and, to some extent, rejection of rationality. Ghosh had chosen thriller pattern for the novel to present his message and ideas effectively. Urbashi

Barat(1999) interprets the significance of Ghosh's choice of employing thriller pattern and states:

> Ghosh's choice of the thriller pattern for his novel becomes especially interesting when it is seen as an ironic takeoff on the way in which stores of medical and scientific discoveries and inventions are popularized in children's books, science fiction tales, Reader's Digest and the like as who's who units and chases.(220)

Though the medical history asserts that Ross discovered the deadly female mosquito on the 20th August, 1897, yet Ghosh has altogether deviated from this fact. He divides the novel into two parts:

1) August 20 : Mosquito day and

2) The day after Ghosh presents L. Murugan as a science freak.

He pursues research to find the fact about malaria story. The novel registers that on world mosquito day, 20th August, 1995, he arrives in Calcutta. He is in search of the enigmatic 'Calcutta Chromosome, which, as we see later, is a freak and unusual chromosome. Shubha Tiwari (2008) explains:

> It is unusual because it cannot be isolated and detected by standard techniques. Unlike our regular chromosomes, it is not even symmetrically paired. It does not run from one generation to the other. It is this stray DNA carrier that Murugan calls *The Calcutta Chromosom.* (52)

The Calcutta Chromosome is a distinctive novel looking up the issue of Malaria and mystery. In everyday life of India, thousands of people die of Malaria disease but it has been for the first time presented in the fictive form. The subject has been treated most seriously blending it with mysticism and mystery,

supernatural and superstition. The writer regards it as the philosophy of science and counter science. He writes:

> Now lets say there was something like science and counter science? Thinking of it in the abstract, wouldn't you say that the first principle of a functioning counter - science would have to be secrecy? The way I see it, wouldn't just have to be secretive about what it did (it couldn't hope to beat the scientists at the game anyway); it would have to be secretive in what I did. (16)

By blending several events into the fabric of the novel, Ghosh makes the narrative delightful. The episode of Murugan's disappearance the very next day, the medical history of Malaria, experiences of Antar(Antar is Murugan's friend and former colleague at New York) and some other scattered events which happened in Calcutta, have been deftly woven into the fictional fabric. Actually speaking, a major part of the story takes place in Calcutta 1930. The laboratory of the P. G. hospital of Calcutta has been the place where Ross made the final breakthrough in his research. He discovered the cause of Malaria in Calcutta(India). Shubha Tiwari remarks: "In the whole world it was India with all its filth, garbage, and puddles that nurtured sufficient number of mosquitoes to make the research possible."(53)

Ghosh finds the game of power politics behind the choice of place. He believes that in the colonial rule, India like other Britain dominated countries, was considered to a country full of dirt and squalor. The ruling - class people did not have proper regard for the countrymen, as in their opinion India was a backward and poor country for them. Shubha Tiwari mentions:

The fact that Ross discovered the cause of malaria in Calcutta(India) has deeper connotations for those who are conscious of colonization... since mosquito can not be taken as a symbol for cleanliness, the place where It resides, is naturally dirty. Ghosh, in fact, uncovers the whole power politics of the west. (53)

In *The Calcutta Chromosome,* Ghosh has employed polytemporal time scheme. He frequently shifts from past to present and from present to future. He shuffles time, as the reader gets confused. Perhaps his aim is to co - relate historical events with the present - day issues which modern man is confronted with. *The Calcutta Chromosome* is a novel in which polytemporal time scheme has been employed. In the polytemporal time schemes there is a constant shift from past to present to future.

In *The Calcutta Chromosome* time and space are deliberately jumbled but this discontinuity becomes meaningful. The constant shifts in points of view and time sequence erase the boundaries between hunters and hunted. However, the novel plays with the movements so effectively that it may come to an end but not its story. It challenges some of the fundamental concepts of the western philosophical, historical and literary traditions. Ghosh examines the colonial world in the post - colonial background. As such history seems to merge with the harsh realities of present day life.

Ghosh's choice of spatial setting and temporal frame is highly relevant inasmuch as he describes a story of a multicultural society in medieval times. Pointing to the fact that cosmopolitanism in pre-colonial contexts has long been disregarded as mere myth, particularly in the case of Middle-Eastern history, he unearths the forgotten life of the Jewish slave. Bomma, which had been carefully

hidden for centuries by anthropology and history in their imperialist versions, the very sciences that he cultivates as a scholar. At the same time, this choice of setting entails a demystification of hybridity as an eminently post-colonial phenomenon, which is an added value to *In an Antique Land* in a time when the literary arena is pervaded with narrative recreations of multiculturalism almost exclusively set in post-colonial times. Padmini Mongia (2003) has drawn attention to this issue, pointing out that

> by offering a glimpse into the cosmopolitan, humane circuit of relations prevalent in medieval India up to the moment when European dominance via colonialism enters its history, Ghosh poses a postcolonial challenge via the pre-colonial [...]. Although European colonialism and imperialism have been written as having a historical inevitability to them, Ghosh's precolonial world questions that inevitability. The world he creates reveals the possibility of futures and jig-stories other than the one we have come to regard as inevitable. (84-85)

Thus we see that physical locale is always an integral element of all his stories. He describes all the physical features of the locales with utmost precision. The mountains, the rivers, the mangroves and the landscape are embedded in the stories and real life incidents in his works. Besides adding realism, this unique use of topography situates all his works in a specific local context. These local contexts represent the experiences and incidences that are universal. Topography in Ghosh also expedites the events like travel and resettlement. *The Glass Palace* highlights the harmonious living and coexistence and interdependence of man and nature and the usefulness of the topographical elements that sometimes lead to exploitation of

a place. Ghosh also makes an effort to describe the adaptation and struggle for survival in the fierce topography in *Countdown* and *The Hungry Tide*. He deftly delineates the fact that it is a conducive topography that leads to settlement and human prosperity and it is human nature that leads to exploitation, displacements and disorder. Intricate relationship between the locale and the themes is another equally significant aspect of his works. Hence, the river, sea, land, landscapes, cities and villages in his works are so finely interlocked with the flow of the work that they are inseparable from his works. What we see is that Ghosh is following a cognitive mapping framework as far as his spatio temporality is concerned.

Cognitive mapping is a term which refers to an individual's knowledge of spatial and environmental relations, and the cognitive processes associated with the encoding and retrieval of the information from which it is composed. Role of cognitive maps is to manage knowledge of and behavior in space. Based on classifications, Freundochuh and Egenhofer (1997) proposed six categories of space: Manipulable objects space; Non manipulable objects space; Environmental space; Geographical space; Panoramic space; Map space.

The study of cognitive maps is important because it is of intrinsic nature to understand how the human cognitive system processes spatial and geographical information and how this processing develops over the life span and also explains and predicts behaviour.

Gibson(1979) pointed out that as people travel through environment they experience a continuous flow of perceptual information and that this in itself is sufficient to encode environmental information without additional cognitive processing. People use their Views' and Vista'. As they move through

environment, their perspective on this vista will change, and changes in perspective provide information about movement.

Heft (1996) following Gibson argued that every route will be uniquely specified by the order of vistas and transitions and that retracing familiar route consists of recreating the flow of information through it. The route through the environment has hierarchical structure which helps people to anticipate changes in the flow of environmental information. Kirk (1963) a geographer who made a distinction between the objective and behavioural environment which is 'physical world' around us and 'psychophysical field' respectively. Environment was the basis for rational human behaviour, so he combined two earlier theoretical traditions: that of rational decision and the idea of perceptual principles.

Cognitive psychologist Neisser(1976) suggested that an individual actively and selectively searches an environment to gain information that is relevant to his/ her immediate needs. Individuals use an 'anticipatory schema' developed from past experiences which guide behaviour, depending upon the aims of the individuals. This approach is called 'transactional' perspective because the environment and the individual are not separate entities. Factors that affect the acquisition of cognitive maps are stimulus and subject centered. Liben (1981) illustrates how past experience and socio - cultural factors such as expected behaviour may contribute to the cognitive map.

Appleyard (1969) suggested that a number of factors can make specific locations easier to remember and with Evans et. al. (1982) found that feature with distinctive form was recalled with a greater ease which became important cues or landmarks in the formation of cognitive maps with two types of physical, distinctive features, first is that it is different in shape and form and the second

refs to the inferred distinctiveness and later feature is distinctive because it is different from the background. Golledge(1991a) said distinctiveness also relates to personal and emotional attachment that people feel towards a place which includes social, cultural, economic, political, religious, historical or personal attitudes towards places and it is likely that places with more functional or cultural significance will have more salience attached to them.

'Familiarity' of a person with a place also affects the understanding of a place, it involves various components like feeling of warmth, safety, security, landmark knowledge, image recognition, passerby, geographical position or history. Familiarity is multidimensional. Wood and Beck (1990) suggested that the personality of the person exploring an environment might effect how will people from cognitive maps. They referred them as; rangers, mixers and fixers. Golledge (1991a) said that culture provides the conceptual matrix that encompasses all experienced information, and therefore, cognitive maps may vary in different cultures. Portugali and Haken (1992) suggested that 'nationalism', or 'culturalism', is one of the filters through which people built up their cognitive maps. Harris (1979) suggested that cultural evolution will shape an individual's experience and knowledge and Hazen (1983) too noticed and described how different cultures used a vanity of techniques for way finding and navigation. Places and routes from the basic building blocks of the cognitive map. The higher level information is knowledge of spatial distribution; it includes recognition of connectivity, understanding of a network which can be of simple grid to complex patterns, and may also vary in terms of size and density. A concept related to spatial distribution and connectivity is spatial contiguity.

A further aspect of cognitive map is classification and Golledge (1993) suggested classification of information can be based on both physical facts and subjective judgments.

'Nativism' implies that children are born with predispositions and react to the world about them in predetermined ways. This point of view is that knowledge is inmate and simply opens up and unfolds with enological maternity (Matthews, 1992). Stea (1976) suggested that having a sense of place would be an evolutionary adaptation and followed Hewe's (1971) argument that 'geographical awareness' was part of the human nature.

'Empiricism' is the opposing view to nativism. It implies that all behaviour and knowledge is shaped and influenced by the environment (Langer, 1969). Matthews (1992) summarized these empiricist theories. The strongest form is stimulus - response theory, where behaviour and knowledge (response) are solely determined by the external reality (stimuli). The next is separate access to each memory store at the time of recall.

'Constructivism' is a synthesis of the position of nativism and empiricism. Knowledge about the environment is just not accumulated (the position of empiricism) or slotted into pre determined structure (the nativism position), rather it is organized and re - organized. According to Piaget and Inhelder (1956), this is accomplished by the processes of assimilation and accommodation.

Evans and Garljngs (1991) argued that the integration of paradigms (e.g. environmental psychology and behavioural geography) is a fruitful venture because it forces a more synthetic analysis that may reveal points of convergence and divergence. Geographers and psychologists can learn from one another. Where psychologist offers geographers a path into understanding the mechanisms of

knowledge development and cognition, geographers can offer psychologists unique insights into the natural and build environment, analyzing behaviour patterns and providing complex spatial and cartographic analysis of externalized knowledge.

Ghosh is also a cultural critic, this fuses into the meanings of his mapping. According to Johanna M. Smith cultural criticism is assumed to be more formal than formalism. It is suspected to be 'highbrow' in subject and style. In great Britain, the term 'Cultural criticism' and 'cultural studies' have been used more or less interchangeably, referring to two different things. The term cultural studies is usually resumed for a broader analysis, whereas cultural criticism typically refers to work with a predominantly literacy or artistic focus.

The goal of cultural criticism is to oppose culture with a capital C. In other words new culture which always equates only with what we sometimes call 'high culture' cultural critics event to make the term culture refer to popular culture as well as to that culture we associate with so called classics. In combating old definitions of what constitutes culture, cultural critics sometimes end up combating old definitions of what constitutes the literary Canon that is, once agreed upon honour roll of Great books. Cultural critics want to get us away from thinking about certain works as the 'best' one's produced by a given culture. They seek to be more descriptive and less evaluative. Culture, rather, is really a set of interactive cultures, alive and growing and changing, and cultural critics should be present and even future oriented 'cultural critics' should be resisting intellectuals and cultural studies should be an emancipator object.

Johnson suggests 'culture' has been an 'egalitarian' concept, a 'tool' of 'condescension' and the belief that a new, 'interdisciplinary' (and sometimes anti

disciplinary)' approach to true culture is now required that history and art and media are so complex and inter related.

It is within these paradigms that Ghosh situates his works. He weaves the woof and the wrap from out of distinct though inter-related stands of travel writing, cultural criticism and cognitive mapping. The whole exercise of trying to explore these three trajectories has been to support the hypothesis the study has grown out of as well as to interrogate Ghosh from hitherto unresearched areas.

One of the salient features of his writings is the continuous play with the aspect of time and space. *The Circle of Reason* relies more on shifting locales but with *The Shadow Lines* Ghosh added the element of sudden shift in time and space. All the works that have followed after these two novels reveal Ghosh's consistent mastery over the purposeful inconsistency of time and space in the narration.

Ghosh has introduced hitherto unexplored places and countries in Indian English Writing. He explores places and issues of places like Burma, Cambodia, Bangladesh, the Sundarbans, and Pokharan .His notion that distances are created more in mind and distances are independent of physical proximity or distances get obvious representation through the writings on such places. We, as Indians, perhaps know more about remote countries like America or England or Australia but we hardly know what is going on in countries like Cambodia or Burma which are relatively in the vicinity of India.

So we see that Ghosh looks back at the past to derive meaning for the events that have affected our present and future. Some of the events from his own past have left undeletable prints on mind and therefore, are revisited in his works. The outrage and the sorrow of these events form his stories and essays and get related to the world. He connects the outcry of Agha Shahid Ali, a man from one

of the most troubled parts of the world and the numbness prevailing in his poetry with the pain of his own and the numbness that humanity experienced by the new form of terrorism that emerged in 2001.The sense of loss perpetrated by the 9/11 attack becomes a point for him to rethink about the form and manifestation of violence that target civilians. His memories of the riots in India in the year 1984, the political suicides of modern world, the violence and loss of life in Burma, North-East India, Kashmir, Afghanistan and Central Asia make him trace the march of brutality and violence culminating into more gory forms across the globe. With the personal experience of horrors of the attack on World Trade Centre, Ghosh is pained to see the world moving towards a more incomprehensible violence which is not to achieve any specific end but with an agenda to fill the world with fear, anger and above all terror. With an awareness of the 'epistemic violence' that has torn apart the stories through which individuals link their lives to collective past and present. Despite the circumstances leading towards more unpredictable and 'utterly inscrutable ' future, Ghosh still holds the hope for continuity of life and weaves stories mapping the past and unfathomable future to locate issues and ideologies of present world.

He also uses traveling as a metaphor for human condition , a world of disorder, a world on move, endless complexities of dwelling and displacement .The communities making , unmaking and remaking themselves represent dualities involved in human life ; helplessness , predicament and conflicts on one hand and reunions, rehabilitations and rejuvenation on the other hand. He also draws in the aspects of cosmopolitanism through the blind alleys of history to our postmodern world. Interestingly, the narrative of these books entwines such qualities that make the journeys made by the characters in fiction and taken up by the author himself in

nonfiction comprise various facets of human experiences. It penetrates the upper layer of basic information that travels generally provide. He pierces it and enters the subterranean layers of burning issues of the places, gives an insight into their problems and gives another perception to look at their problems. The poignancy of the problem, the unrest beneath the layer of so called restoration and resettlements are brought to the surface. The intrinsic relationship between an individual and the society, community living, cultural aspects all get reflected and are reflected upon by the author.

His role creates a challenge that is twofold: he is an author who belongs to the intellectual world of discourses and debates that prevailed in the latter half of the twentieth century; secondly he is also aware of the reality of our lives in the sense of the gap that exists in our so called progressive society. Moreover, he is also aware of the fact that he is writing for readers who belong to postmodern world of faster communication, are also aware of intellectual advancements and informed of their worlds. Ghosh turns this challenges into opportunity for developing his stories and characters that are created with a consciousness and awareness of the aware and well informed readers.

Contemporary world consists of plurality, multidisciplinary and multilingual experience. With the advent of discourse and theories that challenged and toppled the authority of one answer; the system of knowledge has undergone a transformation. Inter-discilinarity has replaced the singularity of approach for knowledge seeking, knowledge generation and knowledge dissemination. Knowledge, in literature is again the wisdom derived through perception, understanding and interpretations of occurrences and accumulated experiences. The relationship between narrative and discourses on human existence is mutually

dependent. Literature, through narrative, is capable of creating universal situations and universally applicable understanding of situations. A character, a place, an event described in a novel can seem to have a local flavor and fictitious on the surface but they are universal in its reach and possibilities. Comprising all these essentials as a craftsman with remarkable achievement Amitav Ghosh captures such experiences and characters from real life and infuses them with the creative imagination.

Ghosh is part of the generation of Indian writers in English who were born and brought up in a world where English is relieved of its colonial burden and is not just a medium of expression. His method of narration which keeps on shifting from first person narration to the third person narration is amalgamated with magic realism, linguistic innovations , play with the concept of time, , history and digressions- all that make his writings postmodern - reveal his awareness of Indian tradition of narrative techniques. Embellished with high seriousness and experiments, his works are not esoteric .An ability to build up poignancy of a tragedy without succumbing to sentimental descriptions is a unique feature of all his writings. He succeeds in adhering to the form while expressing ideologies and building up snowball like stories. Thus, Ghosh shows a mastery over both Western and Indian Traditions of storytelling. Through his dedication to the world of literature and absolute involvement with the issues of history, subaltern and the issues that engulf the peace of our contemporary world, Ghosh has remained a chief contributor to the world of literature in the second half of twentieth century .He continuous to be a prominent voice even after the arrival of the new generation writers like Kiran Desai, Amit Chaudhary and Arvind Adiga. Human life encompasses multiple roles and multifaceted experiences. As a writer , he tries to

represent life with its myriad manifestations. His works transfigures the geographical boundaries and capture the universality of pain and suffering, hope and nobility. The journey that has begun with *The Circle of Reason* after attaining praiseworthy landmarks on the way has come ashore to China with his latest work *River of Smoke,* the second book in the ambitious *Ibis* trilogy.Based on our experience with his past works we may prepare ourselves to see hitherto unexplored aspects of Opium War, some subaltern characters from across the subcontinent, the nuances and the politics of colonialism, the predicament and despair of war, some opportunists exploiting the situation of war in the much awaited third part of the story.

To sum up the issues, ideologies and craftsmanship in Amitav Ghosh's writings, it is evident that his contribution to the world of literature remains of immense importance as he has furthered Indian Writing in English in prose both in terms of content and the form. All his works remain a study of ideological debates on the issues of past and present; penetrating through a complex web of historical, political, economical and the cultural nuances. The oeuvre penned down by him stands for assiduous craftsmanship manifesting his creative contribution to the contemporary world and the humanity in general. Of this one prominent aspect – spatio temporality – is explored in the present study.

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