

Chapter VI

Conclusion

As is evident from the foregoing discussion, Amitav Ghosh has gradually evolved a unique style of his own that transcends many generic boundaries. The issues that he takes up to interrogate in both his fiction and non-fiction are local and global simultaneously and his themes have a universalist underpinning. His oeuvre is distinctively inter-disciplinary and largely post modernistic within the larger frame of post coloniality. As a trained anthropologist and researcher, with a long standing association with Subaltern studies group, added to it his experience in journalism and academics in both the West and in India, his writing is bound to be varied and discursive. Yet, despite the variety and universality, his focus is on the individual and individual identity which he delineates as the locus for change.

Since change is seminal to Ghosh's work, his writing looks at it both diachronically and synchronically, that is both over a period of time and at the same point across borders. Thus writing is bound to be enmeshed in a spatio-temporal web where the two tropes interface one another, become conjuncts and disjuncts of each other. Kanika Batra (2001) says:

The geographical, generic and theoretical "locations" in Amitav Ghosh's writings concretize discursive differential reinscription or reworking of contexts. In his fictional and non-fictional works he places subjects in geographically disparate settings ranging from First World to Third World locations. The fiction of historical reconstruction, ethnographic accounts, travel writing, essayistic

political, social and cultural commentary are some of the genres he chooses to inhabit as a writer.” (212)

All these genres mentioned by Batra as being inherent to the writing of Amitav Ghosh are but strands of the overarching spatio-temporality framework. Historic reconstruction or historiography deals with changes within a geographical space and over a period of time. These reconstructions do not merely depend on documented proofs but on personal travel, memory, memoirs, archived letters, textual traces and grasped performances. For example in *The Calcutta Chromosome* where Murugan is in pursuit of the mysteries surrounding Ronald Ross’ discovery, he writes a research “An Alternative Interpretation of Late 19th Century Malaria Research: Is there a Secret History?” The very title suggests that history is now being reconstructed – another story will replace the earlier one, time will change the logic of history and will compete to project a dialogic contrast – an oppositional logic to say. The accepted history is rendered unacceptable over a period of time, and a crisis of alterity posited. Antar does air his doubts “your version...wouldn’t make sense” (103) is the voicing of an unassimilable temporality which Ghosh is always seen to be advocating.

If we take this up in a post colonial discussion the geographical ‘space’ is the ‘Self’ and its historic reconstruction the ‘Other’ that is ‘time’ becomes the ‘Other’, the former standing for sameness and the latter for heterogeneity. Since space is invariably enclosed, limited time is the factor that helps to open up boundaries, to impart fluidity and un-circumscribe space. However, it is time alone that gives continuity to the narrative, links events in diverse spaces. But Ghosh does not merely depend on linear time, he intersperses it with recollection, memory and imagination. As Phulboni, in *The Calcutta Chromosome*, questions:

Does a story come to be in the words that I conjure out of my mind or does it live already, somewhere enshrined in mud and clay – in an image, that is, in the crafted mimicry of life? (226)

This comes up when an independent narrator repeats Phulboni's fictional tale about a woman bathing in a river who accidentally unearths a figurine from the riverbed. Ghosh is trying to say that imagined realities have factual basis that travel over time to contest or attest the veracity of each other. Similarly spatial truths are all the time being contested and attested temporarily.

Also in *The Calcutta Chromosome* there are ghostly presences which can travel through time and space making these barriers porous. When Murugan is taken to a mental asylum he dreams that he is surrounded by certain presences which draw out his malaria infected blood but these are actual presences. And conversely Murugan's real presence in Antar's room turns out to be a holographic image. Once again the real and the liminal, keep interfacing one another and in so doing breach the narrative sequencing bringing in recalcitrance and debunking of its rhythm.

Ghosh seems to be inventing spaces in *The Calcutta Chromosome*. One such is of Valentinian Cosmology and its relationship to the cult of Mangala Bibi. The crux of the episode is in Murugan's asking. "Now suppose, just suppose you had this belief – don't ask me why or anything, this is strictly a let's pretend game – just suppose you believed that to know something is to change it, it would follow, wouldn't it, that to make something known would be one way of effecting a change?"(215) Back to square one- the known is the space and it is a part of knowledge because time can change it. Knowledge changes the course of history and knowledge is changed by the course of history. That which is there, already

discovered, knowledge, is not permanent; it is liable to change as the past permeates into the present. In this way, spatio-temporality is used to turn history on itself. History as the “other” cannot speak for itself, it needs ‘time’ to reconstruct it. In *Calcutta Chromosome* Ghosh uses the scientific puzzle of the discovery of the malarial parasite as a historical space and Antar, Murugan, Urmila and Sonali as who deconstruct it in another temporal context. What he has attempted here is to overturn historical knowledge and to disempower it.

In an Antique Land is yet another example of juxtaposing two narratives removed in time but joined by history. The first is an autobiographical account, a travel tale about Ghosh’s own anthropological fieldwork in a Fellaheen village and the second deals with the fugitive slave Bomma from the twelfth century who travels from Egypt to India and finally to America. As the subtitle to one edition writes, it is “History in the Guise of a Traveller’s Tale.” It is a multi-locale novel where the spaces are separated by the gap of time which Ghosh has tried to reconstruct as contemporaneous. This is why past history is tied in a dialogic relation between the two interlocutors. As Dipesh Chakrabarty (2001) points out: “The plurality of times existing together (is) a disjuncture of the present with itself” (109). When the disjuncture is made visible and one enters the mind of history one can see that it is not about the past alone. Ghosh makes this evidently clear in *The Imam and the Indian* (2002) when he says that “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 the future.” (317) It is the affective aspect of history that Ghosh is concerned with. With a distinct sense of empathy he transcends temporal boundaries and subverts history.

Even as he tells the slave's story he creates a dialectic between the 12th century Middle East and the present day Arabworld with all its strife and rife. These two narratives run parallel and are intricately intertwined to give us a rich tapestry. The slave MSH.6 is first introduced in 1942 through the incident of a letter which was discovered through an article by E. Strauss during a siege in the Middle East. He was then traced back in time to when the European army of crusaders assembled around Damasens. In this way the past present nexus is established. From that point in the distant past, he is mentioned thirty-one years later as 'business agent' which in itself is a miracle since he is not someone great who can be remembered. But it is these 'trace' occurrences that can be used to reconstruct history for the larger narratives have already been validated. So the slave, like a Derridean 'aporia' resurfaces in 1980 when Ghosh travels to Lataifa. The slave's tale makes Ghosh travel both spatially and temporarily. From there to the Malabar coast where the slave's patriarch travels in 1132 to discover the opportunities of eastern trade, and back again twenty years later. Here Ghosh finds an opportunity to compare the two continents and social, religious and geographical divisions are erased as connections between that past and the present remain still strong. The ancient (antique) and the modern dialectic does not deal with radical departures but with a sense of assimilation-incorporating the old and the new, the there and the here. As Binayak Roy (2011) very aptly quotes TS Eliot to validate how flowing time and continuous history are aligned: "In an Ideal State of society, one might imagine the good new growing out of the good old, without the need for polemic and theory, this would be a society with a living tradition" (T.S. Eliot in Roy, 74). A larger part of history dwells in anonymity, partitioning of the past unless it is retrieved by time. The past is not another country, but a

companion that walks besides, making the present what it is. The book comes out as an epiphany on agelessness and placelessness. A little known, corner of the world becomes an 'everywhere and several centuries coalesce into 'anytime'.

Ghosh's fourth novel, *The Glass Palace* can be called a historical romance that begins in nineteenth century Burma and chronicles through world wars and imperial decay. Again Ghosh indulges in a dual narrative where the first part reads like a major epic and the second half becomes overtly political. Its epic frame owes its genesis to the fact that Ghosh took five years to write it during that time he traveled extensively within Burma. This is how he has been able to realistically depict the many conflicting incarnations of the country. With this geographic landscape as backdrop we are introduced to Rajkumar who is lured at the tender age of 11 to this golden land where no one starves. It is November 1885 and the town of Mandalay is under seizure of the British who send the King into exile. Rajkumar grows into a timber magnate but his lifetime's fortunes blow up into flames with the Japanese bombing in December 1941. Rajkumar and his wife Dolly rebuild their lives and their son Dinu opens a portrait shop. 1929 is another temporal juncture when Dolly is witnessed to race riots. Dinu himself is arrested in 1988 but set free and in 1996 Rajkumar's daughter Jaya, a professor in Kolkata, flies to Rangoon to meet her family. This whole saga is enacted in bits and pieces that we have to put together matching times and places. Each character that inhabits a space in the gap contributes to the cultural backdrop of an era. Once again Ghosh wants us to remember that we must know the past both space and time in order to understand the present.

Narratives usually are enacted in a space that goes beyond specification even though the times may be identified. So to read a narrative is to engage with an

alternative world that has distinct temporal and spatial structures. Usually time and space are used as backdrops where the main action is foregrounded. Time helps to set the chronology of events and often time lends the sequencing of an aura of authenticity. But what Ghosh does in his writing is to reverse the order where time and space are foregrounded becoming subjects in their own right. He makes 'history', whose basic ingredients are space and time, a mode of experience in itself, not an eye glass through which we see others enact their parts. History is not simply about what happened but how it affects the present. It is the history of the land and the history of the time that dialogically accounts for the contemporary. As Ermath (1992) points out: "The medium of historical time is a construct and itself a representation of the first magnitude... without the production of history by modern culture, that is, without the production of a neutral time analogous to a neutral space... we would be without that temporal medium that makes possible an activity" (231).

By this token, a narrative is a "narrative" that is a story and time. Story being derived from 'history' and time encompassing lived historical time and various other dimensions of temporality. History is now being challenged to fit the mould of the many temporalities that we live in. This is exactly what Ghosh emphasizes in his writing. As an anthropologist himself he wants those readings his fiction to understand how one experiences the multiple aspects of time in their lives. There is the lived time, the time of memory, and time of our unconscious mind. At all these points of time history provides the mode of representing and recounting for it is both the residual and the emergent of an experience. As such it cannot be linear there are different orientations of it and as such it complicates the temporal order. A historian's time is basically different from a creative writer's

concept of time. A creative writer is not interested in ‘realist’ history but in how history disrupts and challenges chronology. Ermath (1992) gives this new practice of history the name “paratactic” where instead of the linear recounting one is shifted around among simultaneously unfolding spheres of experience – history. Spaces open up, are inhabited for a while then recede and resurface again. These spaces are the repressed “political unconscious” (Fredric Jameson, 1981) lurking beneath our temporal memory which in fiction become the ways of intervening and transforming something akin to what oral folk traditions do. Ghosh falls into the category of a folklorist who uses space and time critical commentary.

The Hungry Tide as its very name suggests is Ghosh’s most pertinent dialogue on space and time. The sense of place is the most potent protagonist here. The Sundarbans, mangrove forests in the delta of the Ganges are not only the landscape, the backdrop but veritable actors in the drama that unfolds. And the ‘tide’ is a personification of a temporal sequence – the ebb and the flow. The human protagonists who are here to interpret and transcribe are but agents in citing the many histories of the region, they are but aspects of the places they occupy being used in focalizers of the ‘narrative’. Ghosh deliberately makes the narrative slow, meandering often covering over the previous happenings much like the topography it is set in, reproducing the lolling, rolling tide covering the actual timescape of two generations.

This is Ghosh’s construct of history where time and space play pivotal roles. Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan (2003) has also asserted the importance of these constructs in Ghosh’s novels. He agrees that space in Ghosh’s narratives presents a multi-faceted problematic that binds time, place, location and identity in myriad

modes of being. Radhakrishnan presents the following insights paraphrased by Huttunnan (2011).

- Spaces have to be imagined in order for them to become real
- The process of imagining spaces brings to the fore both the need for fixed spaces and their limitations.
- The transcending of these fixed spaces is globally motivated and locally executed.
- Understanding the reality of any specific space does not require ‘inside’ information: spaces are —reciprocally ek-static/exotopic” (2003, 27).
- Through global empathy and ‘precise imagination’ we can understand and experience realities other than our own.
- The imagining of the other’s reality based on violence and exoticism has to be distinguished from a dialogic imagination open to reciprocal and equal transcendence.

As is clear the imaging of spaces brings forth:

new and emergent perceptions of nearness and distance; long denied and repressed affirmations of solidarities and fellow-heartedness in transgression of dominant relationships and axes of power; new and emergent identifications and recognitions in profound alienation from canonical-dominant mystifications and fixations of identity.

(Radhakrishnan, 2003, viii)

Shameem Black (2006) too points out that such a spatial imagination offers a specific way of inhabiting the transnational and transcultural currents of globalization” (45) Black further points out that there is a wonderful paradox” in

Ghosh's treatment of spaces which integrates a 'leap beyond positivism and a "respect for specificity" simultaneously (54). This would undoubtedly need an active imagination that can re-visualize time and space and set them forth beyond the borders of hither to accepted modes of representation. How else would one accept the flights in geographical locales in let us say *The Circle of Reason*. Alu who likes in Lalpukar, after a feud in which he is decreed a political extremist, suddenly finds himself in Al-Ghazira. Such spatial antics defy realist imagination but set within the context that Ghosh gives them, they are acceptable. Again accused of hostility Alu flees, this time to the Algerian Sahara. All this is possible since Ghosh textures his tale with the images of weaving and migrating birds, both of whom can trespass territories. As he writes in *The Circle of Reason*:

So many words, so many things. On a loom a beam's name changes after every inch. Why? Every nail has a name, every twist of rope, every little eyelet, every twig of bamboo on the heddle. A loom is a dictionary glossary thesaurus. Why? Words serve no purpose; nothing mechanical. No, it is because the weaver, in making cloth, makes words, too, and trespassing on the territory of the poets gives names to things the eye can't see. That is why the loom has given language more words, more metaphor, more idiom than all the world's armies of pen-wielders (74)

Weaving is seen as power politics, a production strategy which can be applied to colonial/post colonial circumstances. It also features the ways in which subaltern people both escape the grip of the political logic of the modern state and fall prey to it. Further, the narrative brings to the fore the ways in which diasporic and migrant connections escape the same logic. In the end, the novel shows how

Reason is made to abandon its hegemonic position in the name of practical everyday concerns in many-cultured human encounters comprising multiple customs and traditions. This happens through the dismantling of the discourses of modernist binary constructions (reason/religion, science/tradition, and so forth). I shall examine this process of the disintegration of linguistic totalities in the article on the novel (IV.1.)

Although the novel features many cities and villages from India to Africa, places as such have relatively little significance for the sections featuring oral representations, or stories that come through in Ghosh's novels. In one of his essays, Ghosh comments on the place-connectedness of the Western novel genre and sets it against such Eastern epics as *The Thousand and One Nights*, which gives more value to story-telling than place: "In these ways of storytelling, it is the story that gives places their meaning" (Ghosh 1998), he states and compares them with Joyce's Dublin or American regionalists like Faulkner, whose works would be inconceivable without their specific locations. It seems that although the novel as a genre always needs a location, in these times of constant and rapid changes of place the story is of equal relevance, or even more important. At least this is so in Ghosh's way of writing. In his novels the stories can be freely and fluently adapted to various local circumstances that his texts also need to describe to become narrated as novels. In this way, he juxtaposes the Western novel genre with other ways of story-telling (oral stories, poems etc.). And Ghosh's manner of giving weight to the settings of his novels is such that it emphasizes the connections, the relations between places and their interconnectedness; not only the separate or distinct places themselves. His description of place/s, then, can be seen as a

strategy for connecting two different ways of representation: the delineation of grand schemes and the depiction of the local and particular.

This representation of location, however, requires a certain kind of dislocation from the writer (in this case, Ghosh himself). In *Dancing in Cambodia* and *At Large in Burma* (1998), he refers to the paradox of having to go through an act of dislocation to be able locate oneself through prose:

To write about one's surroundings is anything but natural: to even perceive one's immediate environment one must somehow distance oneself from it; to describe it one must assume a certain posture, a form of address. In other words, to locate oneself through prose, one must begin with an act of dislocation....

This then is the peculiar paradox of the novel: those of us who love novels often read them because of the eloquence with which they communicate a 'sense of place'. Yet the truth is that it is the very loss of a lived sense of place that makes their fictional representation possible. (97)

The goal of Ghosh seems to be to merge the place-dependent representative model of the novel with the story-dependent models of poems and various types of oral stories. This strategy makes the construction of many-sited novels easier: if a certain place does not dominate a narrative, it becomes possible to narrate for instance the journey of the originally Western scientific idea of purity (symbolized by Pasteur's discovery of germs, and the carbolic acid used against them in *The Circle of Reason*) from an Indian village to an Arabian oil-town and on to the Algerian Sahara. In Ghosh's novels, places are significant as the crossing-points of various socio-cultural discourses and historical trajectories, but no original, pure

society or place from which these discourses spring can be found in his texts. If something appears to be original and pure (nation, race, religion, identity), the narrative will soon reveal that purity to be an illusion. Of course, the change in the position (or even definition) of 'place' is related to the changing world order. In the contemporary world, places are increasingly inhabited by people from a myriad of national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, all denominators which have lost much of their place-related definitive power.

Most of Ghosh's novels contain this theme of searching and finding/discovering something. But the most important and prominent theme in the writing of Ghosh is the transcending of the discursively constructed cultural differences, lines and borders for the good of common humanity and interaction. These differences may be conceived spatially, temporally or culturally, and they may be related to class, race or ethnicity.

Ghosh's second novel, *The Shadow Lines* (1988), has received more critical attention than his other, by no means unnoticed, novels. New editions of the novel designed for literary scholars and common readers alike are constantly released, especially in the Indian subcontinent. *The Shadow Lines* is listed in the curricula of several universities around the world.

The Shadow Lines is strongly aware of the ideology of nationalism and its shortcomings in the subcontinent. In the background of the novel lies the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 and the violence and unrest that followed. The miraculous, close to magic-realist features and incidents typical of Ghosh's first novel are here replaced by tight plot structure and realist narration. In *The Shadow Lines*, Ghosh weaves temporal and spatial dimensions into a personal texture on which the anonymous narrator builds his identity. The novel narrates the

history of an Indian family that lives in Calcutta, but has its roots in Dhaka on the Pakistan side of the border. The experience of Partition and of living in the nation-state of India in the 1960s is presented through the symbolism of lines, be they political, communal or geographical, or lines dividing consciousness or identity. The intersecting histories of the family and their British acquaintances, the Price family, are narrated as stories that come into existence through the unnamed narrator of the book. Most of these stories are told by the narrator's grandmother; his Uncle Tridib; his cousins, Robi and Ila; and the family friend, May Price. The stories interweave life in Dhaka before Partition, life in London during the war, and the life the narrator leads in Calcutta during the 1960s and London of the 1970s. Through his narration of several stories representing different worldviews and socio-cultural discourses, the narrator attempts a kind of self-produced unity very much like the one Mahatma Gandhi had in mind for the diverse population of India. In addition, his critique of lines that produce divisions can be seen as directed at the discourse of secular nationalism that the prime-minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, stood for.

From a narrative point of view, *The Shadow Lines* concentrates on the various ways of narrating/giving meaning to the world. It brings together fictive reconstructions of the past based on memory and official history based on ostensibly neutral facts. Ghosh highlights imagination as a way of transcending hegemonic official representations and challenging their neutrality. In this novel, Ghosh seems to concentrate more on the political and power-related aspects of language and narration. There is also a growing awareness of the relativity of the discursive realities that language constructs. Consequently, Ghosh appears to have moved on from his first, experimental novel, which highlighted the power of

narration as the creator of worlds and realities. In *The Shadow Lines*, it is more the shadowing, or muting and eclipsing, nature of these realities that is examined.

The novel offers the reader several ways of experiencing/ narrating the world. The narrator regards his imaginary reconstructions of the past as being more truthful than the actual present. He lives through other people's stories. For him, the actual (as opposed to imaginary) present only serves as the impulse for the narrative reconstruction of memories. For his cousin Ila, the actual present is the real.' Ila cannot see any reason for dwelling in the past or in the imagination. For her "words had nothing to do with an excitement stored in her senses" (30). Then there is the way that official discourses, like the newspapers, narrate the world. When the narrator tries to write about the riots that killed Tridib, he finds himself struggling with silence. For him, this silence is equivalent to a lack of meaning. This reflects the inadequacies of official narratives, or descriptive and allegedly objective narration in general. Ghosh's message here is that we can only know the world through words. But words carry meanings, they carry power, relationships and ideological overtones. For instance, the national discourse of the official reports in newspapers creates gaps, because the words and the world they are meant to describe do not always meet. The newspapers do not take the riots into the national narrative they support because this would mean giving them meaning. The communal and religious riots are left outside the national secularist narrative because this serves the interests of the national discourse. At the end of the novel, the narrator is finally able to give voice to this silence, when May Price relates the story of her own personal experiences of the circumstances surrounding Tridib's death. Here narration and imagination seem to function as tools for weaving together different worldviews and ideologies, as well as voicing the silences

created by the nationalist discourse. The symbol for the encounter with the other, be that a person or the other half of the divided Indian identity on the other side of the border, is the mirror. These mirrors form into 'mirror-windows' allowing the narrator to see out to other selves in addition to seeing his own image reflected.

Ghosh's views on the dislocation required from the writer narrating his/her immediate environment and on the place-centeredness of the Western novel versus the time-based narration of Eastern epics are also relevant here.

Through *Tridib*, Ghosh projects the imaginary London of 1939 which he has gleaned from the stories he has heard and counters these with the present perceptions. Once again the past is set against the present to disrupt the act of knowing. A cultural temporal dilemma, a gap of dimensions occurs. In such a predicament, *Tridib* invents his own stories, constructs a reality based on past experiences and present perceptions. Ila on the other hand forges an imaginary that is very different from the romanticized and exciting picture of *Tridib*. In a conversation this becomes clear:

I began to tell her how I longed to visit Cairo, to see the world's first pointed arch in the mosque of Ibn Tulun, and touch the stones of the Great Pyramid of Cheops. I had been talking for a while when I noticed that she wasn't listening to me; she was following a train of thought in her mind, frowning with concentration. I watched her, waiting eagerly to hear what she would have to say. Suddenly she clicked her fingers, gave herself a satisfied nod, and said aloud, inadvertently: Oh yes, Cairo, the ladies is way on the other side of the departure lounge. (26)

How differently do the two conceptualize space, for Tridib the present reality is a stimulus for reconstructing imagined spaces and for Ila the actual is real. Moreover, Ila's time dimension is the present, for Tridib it is the past flowing into the present that gives his spatio-temporality a unique touch. However, he makes it clear that different people have a different way of relating to time and place:

I could not persuade her that a place does not merely exist, that it has to be invented in one's imagination; that her practical, bustling London was no less invented than mine, neither more nor less true, only very far apart. It was not her fault that she could not understand, for as Tridib often said of her, the inventions she lived in moved with her, so that although she had lived in many places, she had never travelled at all. (27)

In his imaginary he can visualize a space/place that even a GPS system would fail to:

It was easy enough on the A to Z street atlas of London that my father had brought me. I knew page 43, square 2, by heart: Lymington Road ought to have been right across the road from where we were. But now that we had reached the place I knew best. (63)

As Meenakshi Mukherjee (2000) has observed, in the novel "the realignment of the sense of geography happens through an acknowledgement of the subjective space that all human beings inhabit" as well as by "plotting the different points of the globe on the accurately measured pages of the Bartholomew Atlas" with its Euclidian space (135). As Fredric Jameson points out:

[The] conception of city experience - its dialectic between the here and now of immediate perception and the imaginative or imaginary sense of the city as an absent totality - presents something like a spatial analogue of Althusser's great formulation of ideology itself, as "the Imaginary representation of the subject's relationship to his or her Real conditions of existence." (415)

Just as in his other novels in *The Shadow Lines* also there is the amalgamation of time and space – the past gleaned from official records gives rise to an imagined present giving the past an authoritative record and the present an imaginary reality. Such counterbalancing is very seminal to the way Ghosh visualizes spatio-temporality. Different timescapes are sewn together, none is prioritized or rendered superfluous – each has a distinct function to perform and yet they are not at variance for they dissolve into one another seamlessly.² Dipesh Chakrabarty provides a rationale holding:

history, the discipline, and other forms of memory together so that they can help in the interrogation of each other, to work out the ways these immiscible forms of recalling the past are juxtaposed" (Chakrabarty 2000, 93-94)

From the above discussion we can see that Ghosh is a conscious and conscientious writer who has an avowed pattern of disseminating his ideas. He says in an interview with Michelle Casewell:

For me the value of a novel, as a form is that it is able to incorporate elements of every aspect of life – history, rhetoric, politics, beliefs, family love, sexuality. As I see it, the novel is a meta form that transcends the boundaries that circumscribe other kinds of writing

rendering meaningless the usual workaday distinctions between historian, journalist, anthropologist etc.

In another interview with John Hawley (1993) he says: A writer is also a citizen, not just of a country but of the world (11). Here he is expanding his horizons to include larger spaces to negotiate in, to negotiate with. These negotiations result in representations that are both reflective and constructionist. He reflects of varied spaces and times and reconstructs them moving skillfully back and forth since according to him the narrative must be set somewhere, space/spaces are important for him, and since a narrative must evolve time becomes a crucial entity. Travel in time and space is also very important for Ghosh. In *The Circle of Reason*, Alu travels from West Bengal to Kerala to Yemen, Egypt and Algeria. In *The Shadow Lines* there is spatial movement from Gole Park to Southern Avenue in Garihath Road in Calcutta to 14 Lymington Road in West Hampstead, and 1/31 Jindabaha Lane in Dhaka. These real places give a sense of authenticity to the stories he weaves where the concrete allows for the illusionary to take place. Having grounded his characters in space and time, he can now give them imaginary lives and yet they will look real.

As has been discussed, Ghosh plays with far flung time and space zones and then creates parallels with lived/experienced reality to make the two come face to face. This happens in *In an Antique Land*, in *The Calcutta Chromosome* and in *The Glass Palace*. His art as a writer lies in the way he ties and knots the different strands together. One must acknowledge the canonical status his works have acquired in literary and cultural contexts, it is but natural that he is put besides Salman Rushdie as a great post-colonial writer running side by side with Rushdie's 'imagined communities' are Ghosh's 'imagined territories' of space and time

which he valorizes and indicates in his writing. His art lies in multi-layered contexts of space and time not as static entities but as movement – both interior and exterior. This is the reason why his canvas is large and universalist.

Works Cited

- Batra, Kanika. "Geographical and Generic Traversings in the Writings of Amitav Ghosh" *Thamyris/Intersecting*. No. 08, 2001. Print.
- Black, Shameem. "Cosmopolitanism at home: Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 41.3. 45-65, 2006. Print.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. New Delhi: OUP, 2001. Print.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000. Print.
- Ermath, E.D. *Sequel to History: Postmodernism and the Crisis of Representational Time*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. Print.
- Ghosh, Amitav. *Dancing in Cambodia At Large in Burma*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 1998. Print.
- . *The Calcutta Chromosomes*: New Delhi, Ravi Dayal, 1995. Print.
- . *The Circle of Reason*, New Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 1980. Print.
- . *In An Antique Land*, New Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 1992. Print.
- . *The Glass Palace*, New Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 2000. Print.
- . *The Hungry Tide*. London: HarperCollins, 2004. Print.
- . *The Shadow Lines*. Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 1988. Print.
- . *The Imam and The Indian: Prose Pieces*. Delhi: Ravi Dayal/Permanent Black, 2002. Print.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. London: Verso, 1991. Print.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981. Web.

Mukherjee, Meenakshi. *The Perishable Empire. Essays on Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.

Radhakrishnan, R. *Theory in an Uneven World*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003. Print.

Roy, Binayak. "Tiny Threads, Gigantic Tapestrics", Amitav Ghosh's *In An Antique Land*, JPCS, Vol 2, No. 3, July 2011. Web.

Sankaran, Chitra. *History, Narrative and Testimony in Amitav Ghosh's Fiction*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012. Print.