

**MASSES ON MIGRATION: SUBALTERN COSMOPOLITANISM IN
THE NOVELS OF AMITAV GHOSH**

Anand U. Hipparkar

Associate Professor

Dept. of English,

S.M. Joshi College,

Hadapsar, Pune

Abstract

*The present paper is an attempt to bring into light the stifling and vulnerable life conditions of the subaltern individuals and their displaced movement around the world. The leading approach of the domineering world towards the less fortunate public who continuously undergo predicaments over their identities, and who make very wide-ranging migration are striking in the present day context. The two very important concerns of postcolonial readings are subaltern and displacement. It is necessary to make a thorough conceptual inquiry into the significant quests of the marginal and displaced public. There are numerous reasons for the universal occurrence of the peripheral communities in contemporary times. A study of their ceaseless fight for life through their diasporic crusade becomes interesting. The paper undertakes to have a notional study of the subaltern disasters and the 21st century socio-political interpretation of diaspora. It has been found that the subalterns live a desiccated existence and frequently strive to escape from their diasporic movement. The paper analyses Amitav Ghosh's two novels, *The Circle of Reason* (1986) and *In an Antique Land* (1993). The ultimate aim of the paper is to deliberate on the questions of subaltern and diaspora community through fictitious and historical evaluation of his novels from the postcolonial viewpoint using the ideas propounded by Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin.*

Keywords: *Aboriginal, cosmopolitanism, subaltern, diaspora, binaries, displacement, historiography, interlacing, licentiousness, and withdrawal.*

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Introduction

Ghosh is a celebrated novelist of the modern times. He is chiefly concerned with the subalterns and in his works of fiction; he digs up and improves the significant movements. Though there are a number of complications in-built in these efforts, Ghosh's novels are all grounded on a concrete method. The present paper is an attempt to know this methodological basis in a better way. It tries to study and critique colonial foundations so as to rebuild a subaltern perception.

The novels of Amitav Ghosh discover both the individual and the individual aspect of a community. Towards the close of western colonization, the world witnessed two new margins— immigrant societies and societies of livelihood. A huge population of inhabitants from both the colonies travels into diverse western nations including Caribbean province on account of the gravity of social and administrative disturbances in a native and provincial conditions and occasionally by choice. Simultaneously, a number of communities of the occupied colonies travel into the established provinces. The aim of both the type of migrations is merely to alter the existing societal and financial position of the migrants. The European societies also drive their own people into the immigrant colonies in the midst of this upsurge of migrations to escalate European settlements outside Europe. The consequent occurrence of this universal immigration produces 'Diaspora', a social and political undertaking of the 'Subaltern' across the world. The subalterns have to be satisfied with the mediocre public position in their overseas situation and recurrently encounter distresses with their original identity. The binary relationship between the rulers and the ruled ones in every part of

the world generates this defenseless set of immigrants. On the contrary, the endless practice of royal hostility of the West upon the inhabitants of the old colonies, who even now inhabit their time worn households and that upon the lives of the non-European immigrants produces an inexplicable difficulty of 'binarism' in the entire world.

This issue, openly or ultimately, impedes the plane advancement of globalization in the twenty-first century. The subaltern masses have given vent to their feelings based on this master-servant relationship to counter the disparity of the so-called communal, ethnic, and civil systems of today's conditions concerning the same rights for entire human race. These oppressed individuals who build protest have been already recognized as a new community of dislocation having a fresh general and politically conscious identity which is different from the local and county bests, but not entirely estranged.

Margins, Frontiers and Displacement

Contrary to the accounts of cosmopolitanism, the idea of nativism and lingua franca has been regarded as an opposition to movement. Travelling is supposed as isolation from the household and as a practice of displacement in these tales. Displacement is labelled as "a term for both the occasion of displacement as a result of imperial occupation and the experiences associated with the event" (Ashcroft 65). The expression is expected to imply the "willing or unwilling movement from a known to an unknown location" (Ashcroft 65), and contains knowledge beginning with assault and settling down to oppression and captivity. Whereas displacement might be the general experience of all those who have retreated from home, ideas of "globalising" displacement become unsuccessful to handle indigenous displacement problems and distresses.

Subaltern Agency in *The Circle of Reason*

In modern literatures of diasporic mode, the leitmotif of cultural estrangement, hopelessness, and 'Otherization' in the remote territories and a wild desire for the native land often persist and mark them with a depressed attitude except a appallingly negativespirit. Since 1980's, Indian diasporic novelists like Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri and some others have taken the migratory folks' quest for identity to the core of historical attention. In their works, the issue of peripherality has often been deliberated along with the perspective of identity crisis, battle of refurbishment to roots and the longing for the home. The elusive relationship between space and self is a difficult concern in the life of the refugees. The present article proposesto discuss Amitav Ghosh's novels in this light.

Thieme asserts that all of Ghosh's novels have replied Spivak's question about subaltern agency positively and one agrees with Thieme but with regard to *The Circle of Reason*, there can only be a temporary accord. *The Circle of Reason* is divided into three parts, but in the present analysis it is sensible to split it into only two parts. The first part deals with an orphan Alu who lands in Lalpukur to live with his uncle Balaram, and a second part deals with Alu who is escaping from furtive police officer Jyoti Das. The first section ends with blowing up of their house. This part predominantly emphasizes comic characters Alu ("potato-head") and Balaram with his ever-changing fascinations with phrenology, coaching, and later the pasteurian mission of cleaning the city with carbolic acid.

It may appear that these subalterns can, in fact, act. Finally, they build a school grounded on voluntary labour and Balaram accomplishes his germ-fighting venture. Bhudeb-Roy is the area's corrupt politician and his actions can be objected because he, with the help of the national ruling classes literally blows up Balaram and his house. It might be true that the subalterns can attempt to perform an action but the consequence

is an instant and savage reply from the chosen few. The worth of action and voice is in this situation one's life.

The next section of the novel charts Alu's flying from the established order, who consider him as an extremist. He attempts to settle down in al-Ghazira. At this point, he is thoroughly quietened and infrequently speaks. He becomes the character around whom the narrative shifts instead of being the agent of the story. It goes on until he is freed from under the ruins of the Star, a distorted multi-storey building. At this moment, Alu is prepared to get hold of agency another time and he announces a strategy for a society shorn of money. Once again, one learns as readers that the subalterns act. However, again the ruling classes get involved and the result is mortal.

The story reveals that moneyless society is crumpled by home-grown and national establishments, but also by neo-imperialist oil dealers. Besides creating a (brutal) consumerist as opposed to (generous) Marxist trial within the novel, the indication of part one is reiterated. The subalterns can and do grab agency, but when doing so the authorities instantly respond with the intention of crushing any such agency. The consequence in both instances is demise. Therefore, towards the end of the novel it becomes nearly fabulous, an "agency of breath".

The issue of rootlessness or the search of one's origin or individuality has been a recurrent theme for literary debates and discussions in Postcolonial South-Asian literary domain from the second half of the twentieth century. This issue has evident socio-political overtones. People move to distant areas or terrains owing to a number of socio-political or individual desires. The ceaseless movement of human beings occasionally as peripheral refugees is a subject matter which has been given much literary thoughtfulness in South Asian writings about the displaced.

Amitav Ghosh's first novel, *The Circle of Reason*, is a type of novel that much advances in Latin America, a continent where the condition of the people is not conducive to novels of rational cause and effect. The protagonist of *The Circle of Reason*

is named Nachiketa Bose but he is called Alu, which means 'potato.' He is called so is owing to the shape of his head which is knotted, bouncy and extremely large. This malformed hero is imagined in some kinds of magic realism. He goes into an imaginary realm that is constructed on a foundation of misallocated literalism when Alu's uncle Balaram sets phrenology to work on him.

The war breaks, where a plane smashes near the village and the villagers take away its bits and pieces until blue-attired groups reach to catch them. Once war gets over, Alu is doubted to be burning the village and manages his escape, chased by a Police Officer called Jyoti Das. Das is first and foremost a birdwatcher but he has to retain silent. Das has an incomprehensible complexity of Indian men which follows true image Mr. Ghosh had. ALU navigates to the East African harbour of al-Ghazira on a dilapidated ship called the Mariamma. It belonged to some Hajji Musa who was not a great Moslem. Alu, Zindi and Boss wait for a strongership that would take them home. The roguish account that is over crowded with characters ends up without giving the readers any message.

Ghosh deals with the movements of the marginalized groups who were depicted as non-existing in histories of nations of the displaced. Ghosh's novels challenge history by brushing it up it like the relation of the individual to his past. He, thus, handles history as one of the tales. His novels highly allegorical novel is *In an Antique Land*, works against the scientific view of history. Memory plays an important part in the rebuilding of history which helps to interrogate the so called objective, impartial meta-narratives on freedom, nationalism, knowledge and development. In *In an Antique Land*, Ghosh's storyteller is hardly to be found occupied with the gathering of ethnographic records.

Ghosh's "I" narrator has a tendency to move between "the textualized character of the narrator," a considerate, insightful researcher who ponders over his familiarities in the village and counterbalances them against his information of Mediterranean

history, and “the textualized persona of the field investigator,” who is a more witty character. Therefore the “I” figure is highly complex. He is both the academic—simultaneously ethnographer, historian, and polyglot—and a childlike creature who is expected not to know even very simple data about sex and nature. Sometimes this innocence is represented as a consequence of partial information about Arabic, as when he causes bewilderment by his admittance that he has never perceived the word for “sex” before (61). In other instances, Ghosh plays with the idea of himself as Mr. Simpleton by way of what seems to be pure frustration. After young men joke at him for being unable to know the Arabic for “sex” or “masturbation,” the narrator himself chooses to embellish their typecasts of him, demanding that he has faith in the image of the moon in a pond is the light from Ahmed’s torch (64).

Conclusion

Finally, it can be said that *In an Antique Land*, Ghosh wrestles with the issue of demonstrating the ‘Other.’ He discards any particular ancient or anthropological version’s right to offer a reliable and whole account of the Other. His debate of anthropology proposes that its investigation procedure is organized on hidden affairs of ascendancy. The Other’s specificity is likely to be merged in ethnographic exploration, as simplifications about the community are made at the cost of arguments about gender, class, age, and historical surroundings. In preference to the epistemologically intimidating arguments of history and anthropology, Ghosh proposes a deliberately restricted and dialogic story. He proposes that to offer a non-coercive version of alterity, the text should have multi-faceted, creative, and fluid structure.

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