

CHAPTER-V



Chapter V

Conclusion

The mass destruction caused by nuclear weapons in World War II brought unrest and anxiety all over the world. The situation gave rise to psychological disorders and loss of moral values, and profoundly disturbed man's mental peace and harmony. World literature, responding to the new era, started to deal with the different gloomy faces of modern society. The loss of identity, alienation and displacement has been recurring themes of the modern novels.

Indian novelists earned recognition and acclaim in the western world during the eighties. This has been the most productive and eventful decade of Indian English Literature. It is the period of the so-called 'new' fiction, wherein a breed of new novelists emerged. It includes Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, and Upamanyu Chatterjee. Great masterpieces were created by the highly creative minds. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, which became an international bestseller, can be called a turning point in the history of Indian English Literature. His next work is *Shame* and *Satanic Verses*. Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason*, *The Shadow Lines*, *The Calcutta Chromosome*, *The Glass Palace*, *The Hungry Tide*, *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke*; Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*; Upamanyu Chatterjee's *The English August*, are the internationally acclaimed novels written during this period. As they followed the footsteps of Salman Rushdie, they are considered as the children of Rushdie. These novelists give voice to insecurities, disorientation and fragmentation.

Amitav Ghosh is immensely influenced by the political and cultural milieu of post independent India. Colonialism, communal riots, Partition of India, the Iran-Iraq war,

British invasion of Burma and World War II are few historical events that feature in the novels of Amitav Ghosh. Post-colonial resettlement of the post-partition period and the subsequent increase in the diaspora and displacement are also focused in his works. His novels document stories of how large sections of the Indian society have been trampled down and defeated by the storms and tides of history. The greatest impacts of migration are the historical events that culminate in migration. He addresses the impact of migration as it befalls on his migrants. Being a social anthropologist and having the opportunity of visiting alien lands, he comments on the present scenario the world is passing through in his novels. The novelty of his novels is provided by rich themes and graphical locations. His books challenge the centres of power and prestige, and crusade for the impoverished and the displaced and create spaces for the plight to be heard.

Amitav Ghosh's novels deal with the most contemporary issues such as modern man's sense of alienation, rootlessness, homelessness, identity crisis, problems of marginalization, etc. All his characters and events, though imaginary, are created around some facts from the past or present. Life has become nothing but silence and pauses without harmony and destination. He encapsulates their pain of violence, alienation, displacement, sufferings due to war and national crisis. Such events of despair and bleak aspects of human life have found an expression in all his fictions. His engagement with such aspects of human life that brings humans in tryst with destiny, nature or society reflects his interest in the unpleasant aspects of human existence.

The novel, *The Circle of Reason* problematises the precarious life that the migrants live in the gulf countries and the transience of freedom and material prosperity in modern life. It is an allegory about the destruction of traditional village life by the

modernizing influx of western culture and the subsequent displacement of non-European people by imperialism. In *The Glass Palace*, the havoc caused by Japanese invasion in Burma and its effect on the Army officers and people - a sense of dejection that deals with so much human tragedy, wars, deaths, devastation and dislocation – has been penned. The Burmese Royal family, after the exile, lives an uncomfortable life in India. Rajkumar who piles heap of amount in Burma is forced to leave his home and business due to Japanese invasion. In *The Hungry Tide*, the theme of immigration, sometimes voluntary and sometimes forced, along with its bitter/sweet experiences, runs through most incidents in the core of the novel – the ruthless suppression and massacre of East Pakistani refugees who had run away from the Dandakaranya refugee camps to Morichjhapi as they felt that the latter region would provide them with familiar environs and therefore a better life. Ghosh routes the debate on eco-environment and cultural issues through the intrusion of the West into East. These events exemplify serious repercussions on people's lives.

Ghosh's migrant characters, like Alu, the Royal Family, Rajkumar, Zindi, Kusum and Fokir experience forced and voluntary migration. Driven by a quest for identity and migratory instinct, Ghosh's protagonists – Alu, Rajkumar, Fokir are either orphans or aliens to the cultural and social milieu in which they are placed. They are made to go through immense transitions in their lives with the intrusion of historical events and these transitions are either forced or deliberate. Forced migration becomes the foundation for their migration and displacement, while voluntary migration becomes the basis of their relocation for migrant characters from their home country.

In the new land migrants driven out of their country by force are befuddled of their position while undergoing a confused state of mind. The bliss of freedom has disappeared. They experience a sense of rootlessness that could only be made stable with a possible return back home. This further leads to a feeling of alienation as the migrants are in constant search of their identity. What they are and where they belong are questions that nag their minds. They are not able to let go of their old identity nor are they content with their new distinctiveness. What emerges is a sense of belonging that creeps into their minds creating further complications. They are clueless if they should either submerge themselves into the new place and its people or cling on hopelessly to their own nationality. While hankering for the land of their birth they are also placed in a fixed position troubled by the new identity they are absorbed into.

Ghosh takes a strong stand for the rights of the dispossessed. He is conscious of their situation and is anxious to tell their stories to the world. These people have varied and intense stories they wish to share that Ghosh wants history to take notice of. Ghosh tries to probe deep into the psyche of his protagonists to lay bare the impact of this displacement, on the minds of the characters. The drive to see across the physical and mental barrier is discussed in detail by the novelist. In each novel Ghosh deals not with a single nation and the life of its people but with a multiplicity of nations and the lives of people who follow multiple religions, cultures, ethnicity and language. Displacement has been a central process in his fictional writings; departure and arrivals have a permanent symbolic relevance in his narrative structure. Reconfiguration of the histories of the South-East Asian countries like, Burma, India and Malaya and the repercussions of the British annexation of Burma to British India in 1895, the First and Second World Wars,

the Japanese invasion of Burma, the sense of rootlessness experienced by the people, migration and the resultant identity crisis and hybridity in language, religion and culture in their colonial and postcolonial phase find elaboration in his novels *The Circle of Reason*, *The Glass Palace* and *The Hungry Tide*.

Ghosh sketches the response of the migrant, who are on the verge of arrival at the new land. At times the response is one of a comfortable gesticulation like in the case of Rajkumar Raha in *The Glass Palace* who builds his home in his adopted land. But that is not the common response. Most often, these migrants are ushered into a land that is hostile towards them. In *The Hungry Tide*, the migrants are perceived of as trespassers; they face the wrath of the local people there and are subjected to torture, attacks and resentment. The experiences of the migrants are at times advantageous and at times detrimental to their lives. Therefore the reader experiences a two-way response to migration by the arriving migrants in Ghosh's novels.

In *The Circle of Reason*, it is the motley migrant group that travels from Mahe to al-Ghazira on the boat 'Mariamma' with their eclectic backgrounds, is a perfect illustration of the futility of divisions based on caste, race or religion. This motley group seeks to restart their lives too. As the ship moves ahead, so the life of its inhabitants is changing. This is how old alliances are getting weak and past is tamed to construct fragmented identities in to new.

The protagonist Alu who is evading an incompetent Indian police chase and an absurd charge over a petty strife between his uncle Balaram and the corrupt Bhudeb Roy; Zindi, a 'madam' who runs a house of prostitutes in al-Ghazira after being banished by her husband on account of barrenness; Karthamma and Kulfi who have been picked up

by Zindi to be prostitutes there; Rakesh, an ex-travelling salesman of Ayurvedic laxatives which he could never sell; Professor Samuel who propounds theories about queues; and others, are all aboard the multicultural boat on their way to al-Ghazira.

The readers witness mass exodus or migration where entire communities are displaced. The novel sets the tone of the author's concerns about the issues of the lives of powerless. Alu's life is completely jeopardized because of Bhudeb Roy. As the novel progresses he turns out to be a complete political bully. He invites Balaram to teach in the school but as the time passes, the rivalry between the two takes an ugly shape. Budheb Roy is powerful both economically and politically. This enables him to devastate Balaram's world. Thus, the powerful destroy the lives of people without power. Even after the death of the entire family, Bhudeb is not satisfied and manages Jyoti Das to believe that Alu is the culprit of the murder of his own family. Alu is pushed into a life of a permanent refugee; multiple displacement forces him to move from one place to another in order to escape imprisonment. The title, *The Circle of Reason* reflects the novel's sense of nothingness, when the protagonist's search for reason leads him on to a journey that ends at the point where he began.

Alu, who crosses border after border gets stuck inside 'anajama' or otherwise called the Star, a newly built construction building, where he was working during its collapse. The whole building from its creation to destruction symbolizes diasporic community's position in al-Ghazira. It has been said that engineers from different parts of the world 'England or India, or Egypt, America, Korea, Pakistan who knows where' made the building and mixed sand instead of enough cement is only for making their own profit and that caused the collapse.

Alu did not die as he is skilled enough to survive in great difficulties and he came out as an idealist like his uncle Balaram Bose and discovered that the ultimate dirt of the earth remains in money or capital and that should be removed. Another cause of its fall was 'nobody wanted it to stand', though many people worked there nobody belonged there. Alu and Zindi with their whole group were literally chased by Jyoti Das. Their life in al-Ghazira ended on that day leaving Karthamma and Abu Fahal dead as five of them could manage to escape from there.

In the fight against filthy, irrational life and corruption, the innocuous lives of these people meet a sudden end. Once a person is displaced from home it becomes difficult for him to establish his identity in a new society. They pass through traumatic fear of being detected by the local police or administrative authority. Their nationality forces them to be differentiated by the people of al-Ghazira. The migrants are invariably not welcomed by the natives particularly in their social life. They are naturally deprived of the rights of citizenship. The novel marks the search for meaningfulness of those whose lives are displaced by globalization, and whose very bodies bear the violent marks of this passage, this history.

The novel, *The Glass Palace* is a testimony to the historically unresolved sufferings of the rural poor. It is a transnational struggle of victims. The novel exposes the plight of the tide country's marginalized people. The dominating urge of the homeless migrant to form a nation is a major theme predominant in this novel. It also concentrates on the theme of imperialism and post-colonialism, which is resulted in the other following themes – displacement, search for identity, etc. All the themes are interlinked with one another. Beginning with major political upheaval in Burma, the novel, *The*

Glass Palace proceeds to witness more such political exodus and migrations. The novel revolves around the issues of people on the periphery, people who struggle hard to come to the fore lines of social structure through economic advancement. The characters range from members of the Burmese royal family to commoners like Dolly, Rajkumar, Saya John and Uma.

The novel begins with the King of Burma dethroned and the royal family is exiled to the remote hilly regions of Ratnagiri in India, which lay between Goa and Bombay and Rajkumar's loss of his mother and his journey to Burma. Thus, Rajkumar is an outsider in the country, soon to be colonized. He travels round many places freely and gains profit. With the course of time, the Burmese Royal family, after the exile, lives an uncomfortable life in India; while Rajkumar accumulates wealth and scales up in social hierarchy.

The deportment of the Royal Family undoubtedly wipes out monarchy from Burma. But it also has a more important aspect to it that Ghosh deliberately focuses upon, the lives of the last king and queen of Burma and their children on exile. Traditional history may fail to record the way of life of the Royal Family but Ghosh does not. His focus is more on the life pattern of Royalty as they are reduced to the status from monarchy to royal prisoners living as slaves in their prison in Outram House. These are undocumented histories of a Royal Family that loses its divine right to rule over its land and people. History no longer cares to trace and document their decrepit lives. Burma lost its age-old heritage of monarchy but the Royal Family stayed closely bonded to one another in the foreign land far away from their country.

The world war again brings in the downfall of the empire set by Rajkumar and the positions are changed once again. His happiness ends when his son is killed by Japanese bomb blast. Rajkumar is forced to return to India as a destitute begging for a roof to shelter him from Uma who was against his exploitative attitude towards his fellow brethren. Dolly, his wife, though accompanied Rajkumar to India, returns to Burma and joins the Buddhist nunnery in Burma where she breathes her last. Such an internalisation leads these characters to live a life of hollowness, fear and uncertainty.

All the characters are united by the rough winds of historical displacement, and it is the commoners who play a more vital and significant role in the attempts at bridging borders. Whereas characters like Rajkumar and Dolly are forever trying to establish their own identity in the face of British colonialism; others like Beni Prasad Dey and Saya John always want to conform to the coloniser's mannerism and language. All this and Uma's direct involvement in the freedom struggle after Beni Prasad Dey's demise, make it a predominantly post-colonial novel. Through the experiences of the widely travelling Rajkumar, Ghosh describes the suffering and tribulations of the exiled victims of the breaking of nations and consequent displacement.

The Hungry Tide penetrates a picture of man's complex interaction with nature. Amitav Ghosh brings out the interrelationship between human, nature and animal worlds. The life in Sundarbans and nature is weaved together to such a great extent that the inhabitants are forced to accept nature's bounty and adversity. Nature is proved to be stronger than manpower; it is both destroyer and preserver. It is an island where people share with animals. Every year, myriads of people are being killed by tigers, snakes and crocodiles. Man is helpless in front of natural calamities. The predicament the inhabitants

suffer due to unwanted, unexpected tidal surges and tiger attack shows a serious ecological calamity on earth. The condition of their living is much inferior to animals. This a global concern that is deliberately neglected by politicians leads to the doom of mankind.

The novelist indicates deteriorating condition of both the *place* and the *people* living in the Sundarbans by making use of several symbols, though indirectly, such as title of the work, waves, tidal surges, mud, religious stories etc. The problems, which are depicted in the novel, are the post war aesthetics of post-colonial migration; resettlement of refugees and orphans, and their unfulfilled hopes and aspiration of the post war. Amitav Ghosh in his novel defines the space of home in relation to nation and in relation to the global village. The novelist puts forth the vivid analysis of the major themes like home and homelessness, search for identity, cultural complexities, importance of language and different emotions of people. Fokir, the son of Kusum is a unique character that acts as a representative of all those unsung and unheard heroes of tide country. He is the living embodiment of what happened in Morichjhapi so many years ago, and for him home has an added significance of the struggle for survival.

The fight for survival against both other people and the beasts is powerfully conveyed through Kusum, the victim of Morichjhapi, after the water and food supplies are cut off to the island coerce the refugees to flee. Horen takes Nirmal to Morichjhapi where he meets Kusum after years. He happens to see the entire movement of Morichjhapi through Kusum's eyes and finds the type of revolution he sought throughout his life. For him the cry of the refugees becomes a representative of all such subaltern communities without home. Fokir's life has been a struggle from early childhood;

throughout the novel he emerges as a silent hero who is not much respected either in his society or by his wife. Piya, the researcher returns from New York to the Sundarbans in India to pursue her research, abandoning the sophisticated life in America.

Ghosh advocates the need to identify the contributions made by women. The novelist conscious of their apprehension, their plight and their keenness to make themselves heard, provides them a platform to make their voices heard. He gives them the importance they never had in spite of their involvement and participation in a glorious past. By giving voice to a woman's perception and her individualistic opinions, Ghosh provides an alternative vision of the past. His women characters may not come through as the protagonists of his novels but they do play roles that are crucial. They cannot be suppressed nor can they be ignored. Uma Devi in *The Glass Palace* emerges as a woman who lends her voice to the practice of non-violence for the fulfilment of her cherished dream of political freedom. Kusum in *The Hungry Tide*, sacrifices her life in the Morichjhapi incident, fighting for the cause of the refugees. Nilima in *The Hungry Tide* is the woman who works for the development of the people of Lusibari, a town created by Sir Daniel Hamilton, to live in peace, harmony and equality.

Ghosh does not want historical events, which display the atrocities of the government towards its subjects, to be simply wiped out of the memories of people. Always speaking for the voiceless through his novels Ghosh uses his protagonists Alu, Rajkumar and Nirmal as his mouthpiece in the hope of bringing to life what is left untouched as well as voicing a ray of hope for change. His characters seek to cross multiple barriers – the barriers of language, religion and social class, those between human beings and nature, between traditional and cosmopolitan, between urban and rural,

and between India and the wider world. Preservation of the tradition rather than a radical break through seems to be the reigning motif of the novelist even though people become displaced from their native place. The disturbing predicament of rootlessness and non-belonging urges the postcolonial subject to move on in search of new pastures and to explore the sense of belonging of the traditional, old people to their soil.

Home is a place of intimate situations, pleasant memories, warmth and protection, security, a private and caring environment. But as a place, home is also not static. They keep on changing. Places are created, expanded and the images are constructed to represent. Therefore, home is a psychological attachment with the place and it can be transferred and transplanted. It is not something unrecoverable or lost forever in the darkness of time caused by displacement. He does appreciate an individual's effort to cope up with life. An individual's small efforts to reconcile with life, is the actual point of change for the march towards peace.