

The Journey Motif in Amitav Ghosh's Novels

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Amitav Ghosh, the snow haired writer, has used intentionally the journey theme as a metaphor and symbol of life. The journey of the characters is happening from the fantasies of their past realities and arriving to the truth and the present realities of life. It is observed that the main characters struggle to move into the future and live in the present. The style of his writing is back and forth movement of narrative and is in sprinkled pieces. Time past which means memory and time present which means reality are seen in the novels. The novels end with many questions.

The main character, Nachiketa Bose, in *The Circle of Reason* travels from Lalpukur in East Bengal through Malabar in Kerala to the East African Port of A1 Ghazira. Finally he ends up his travel in the sand dunes of El-Oued on the Algerian Sahara. The characters in *The Shadow Lines* appear on wheels which run everywhere. *The Calcutta Chromosome* has universalized the specific throughout the perception of quest and journey. Rajkumar in *The Glass Palace* is a great traveler. The sub-titles of *The Glass Palace* show movement of place such as Mandalay and Ratnagiri which are situated on the banks of the sea. *The Hungry Tide* is called short-lived work of the imagination. At the heart of this epic saga *Sea of Poppies* is a vast ship, the Ibis. This novel is the first in a trilogy of novels. The second in a trilogy of novels is *River of Smoke*. As transporting and mesmerizing as an opiate-induced dream, *River of Smoke* is heralded as a masterpiece of 21st century literature. The last one is *Flood of Fire* of Ibis trilogy.

Amitav Ghosh is a traveller who is eager to gain knowledge from travel multicultural; diversity and hybridism are seen in his books. Themes in Ghosh's books show development from the darkness to the light. One sees a constant moving and migration in his books which are some of the factors of life. Ghosh is a wanderer like Piyali and Kanai, the characters in *The Hungry Tide*, and dolphin is the greatest wanderer in this novel.

Time floats and mixes along with blending of fact and fiction in his writing. Coalescing of different branches of knowledge - history, anthropology, philosophy, sociology and religion are seen in his travelogue - *In an Antique Land*. Ghosh interacts at least in four languages, and with many cultures spread across continents and for centuries. Amitav Ghosh brings Time of two kinds - time past which means memory and, time present which means reality in his works. Ghosh's journey is not only a physical one but also a voyage of the spirit.

As in *The Shadow Lines* the narrator lives the life of Tridib who died in a mishap. There one finds the transmigration of the soul of Tridib into the narrator. In the journey, adventure helps him to know himself and the world. He describes himself as a traveller interested in people and places.

Amitav Ghosh is of the view that travel is an innate primordial quest to expand one's awareness into realization. The characters in the writings are seen journeying'

into the time and for developing the story, he goes back into the Past. Ghosh's journeys are not a bed of roses. He faced difficult situations while journeying. His thorough knowledge of history is seen in the books.

To Ghosh journey is a metaphor and symbol of life. The reader always embarks on a journey of an uncertain domain of the past, present and future as the author explores them. The constant shifting between three points of time- past, present and future in cinematic technique enables readers to visualize past, present and future in his works. About Ghosh, one can say that he is a performer who explores some mystery; consciously or unconsciously, he moves towards a preordained direction of truth.

Ghosh universalizes the theory of transmigration of souls and the right to knowledge. This transmigration is a journey of soul from one person to another which implies the journey from darkness to light of the knowledge. In some of his works, one finds the Indian faith of the journey of soul. His journey is from known to unknown and from unknown to known.

Some features of Ghosh's fictions may be traced to *the Panchtantra*. Some of his books have journey motif throughout them and there is constant movement of travelers, who traverse across cultures, continents and centuries. Amitav Ghosh's novels not only portray journeys but these journeys are embedded in specifics of culture and history. The characters in his novels are forever journeying, displaying as always its modernity in the various avatars the characters appear.

As a true novelist, intuition and imagination are Ghosh's forte. Ghosh wonders how the boundary lines of the territory can divide the human society into several different segments. His writings reflect the recent concern of anthropologist with the porosity of cultural boundaries. The characters in Ghosh's novels do not discriminate among cultures. His novels dwell on travel in cultural spaces flowing across borders. Influenced by the subaltern studies, Ghosh returns to a rigorous mode of empirical research to recover the history. In his writings there are cultural space, borderless region with hybrid languages and practices which circulate with national or religious boundaries. He writes with the subaltern consciousness particularly in his novel *The Glass Palace*. The writings of Ghosh have the histories of border crossing, Diasporas and migration. He has been able to move freely in his writing between anthropology, history and fiction.

Looking at every face we could see. But there was nothing to be seen except crowds, Nabeel had vanished into the the pages of the epic exodus.

He has described here the scenario of Baghdad and the situation of the Gulf war. Amitav Ghosh brings to English language an ease and felicity of expression which all his fiction with a quality of its own. Some of his novels use time in a non-linear manner. The juxtaposing of past and present in the works of Ghosh is blended very artistically.

Most of the novels of Amitav Ghosh are set in the future and delve into the past. One sees the journey to the unknown and a quest for immortality. Ghosh believes in the quote. 'Knowledge is power'. The imagination in the novels is often weird, uncanny and of unfamiliar world.

Ghosh has faith in the correlation of all the cultures and religions. He believes in unity in diversity. He is a cosmopolitan writer and tries to explore neighboring countries in his novels. The European models are discarded in his works. He raises the questions of national identity, cultural and political issues. In his novels, particularly *The Glass Palace* and *The Calcutta Chromosome*, the human interest is predominant under the spell of colonialism.

Amitav Ghosh describes the aspirations, disappointments and defeats of dislocated people in America, Burma, China, Malasia and India. He doesn't talk about cultural displacement but he makes the reader think about the relation of culture to economic and political structures in today's world of globalization. As Diaspora, he records the historical depth and its meaning in the works. Ghosh examines questions of empire and responsibility of tradition and modernity. Nationalism is seen in his works. He has multiple view points of the dispersed people of different nations and makes a plea for internationalism to define the contemporary globality. His works have shown how the context of imperialism has changed to globalization. Ghosh's novels are considered as cultural instrument for the sake of social betterment. The novels attempt to universalize human relationship in the globalization. Thus he has a civilizing mission with his work.

Ghosh exhibits a rare power of observation which enables him to create lively pictures of the wonderful things-- the seas, the forest, the landscapes, the rivers and the most significant aspect is that he perceives the human mind and its loss and gain.

His works are always compared with a magic carpet which transports us across time and space. His works have many autobiographical elements. He always takes the reader on a trip in search of something in past and in future. His flights of imaginations are with reality and common sense. The flash-back technique and the narration of the present event are seen in the works as real one. He shows the reader that the experiences of individual's life are united together. He also deals with mental spaces which reflect the fact of the life in his novels. Amitav Ghosh's novels inter-weave temporal and special form through the interconnected motifs such as nationalism, political freedom, and personal freedom.

As a true researcher, Ghosh studies and searches the humanity and for humanity he dreams the unity and equality of human race. He, throughout his writings, has given this philosophy for the benevolence of humanity. The egoless or innocent characters are his main characters in his literary works. As a traveller and as an anthropologist, Ghosh brings the new ideas of unturned pages of the past history to his writings.

The validity and factuality of the historical events in his works is beyond doubt. Ghosh places the novels today as 'a universally recognized historic form of literary art.' He takes the reader through many parts of the world. He has interest in Anthropology; he has visited so many historical places which make his works interesting as well as informative.

Frequently one sees the subtitles in the works of Ghosh as: coming' home, going away, arriving, departing, going back, dancing, island, river, wave which show constant

moving on. That's not merely a geographical or physical movement but also a movement, from ignorance to knowledge, from unconsciousness to Consciousness. He knows the events of the world because of his roving eyes.

The journey motif in his books speaks of Amitav Ghosh's obsession with the quest motif operating in the restless psyche that has absorbed a cultural displacement at the outcome of the colonial regime. Journey motif becomes an obsession which is revealed almost in every book and so the world is seen more clearly and in a new outlook. He is of the view that journey is necessary for seeing the world clearly and the experience one takes is worthwhile because journey broadens the mind. To Ghosh journey is a metaphor and symbol of life that man must understand in search of truth and fulfillment.

Works Cited

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