REDEFINING SUBALTERN DISCOURSE: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE OTHER IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF AMITAV GHOSH

Thesis Submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature

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Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis titled "Redefining Subaltern Discourse: The Representation of the Other in the Selected Works of Amitav Ghosh" submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is a work of bona fide research carried out by Ms. Prathibha P. under our supervision and guidance and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or any other similar title or recognition.

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This is to certify that the board of adjudicators who evaluated the Ph D thesis titled "Redefining Subaltern Discourse: The Representation of the Other in the Selected Works of Amitav Ghosh" by Ms Prathibha P, Research Scholar, PG Department of English and Research Centre, Vimala College, Thrissur, has made no suggestions for revision or correction of the same. The thesis is therefore being submitted in its original version and format, without any change or revision.

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Declaration

I, Prathibha P., hereby declare that the thesis titled "Redefining Subaltern Discourse: The Representation of the Other in the Selected Works of Amitav Ghosh" is a work of bona fide research carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Anila Joseph and co-guidance of Dr. O. J. Joycee and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or any other similar title or recognition.

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Abbreviations Used

COR - *The Circle of Reason*

SL - *The Shadow Lines*

IAL - *In an Antique Land*

CC - *The Calcutta Chromosome*

GP - *The Glass Palace*

HT - *The Hungry Tide*

DIC - "Dancing in Cambodia"

ALB - "At Large in Burma"

DICO - *Dancing in Cambodia and Other Essays*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> Amitav Ghosh's novel examines the relevance of nationalism's concern with geographical restoration in the context of a new borderless, global landscape. (Gera 109)

The observation made by the above critic regarding Amitav Ghosh's concern as a novelist can be taken as an indicator towards his position in English literature too. Like the distinct subject matter that distinguishes each of his work, the writer too seems to inherit many disciplines through his works. Born in Kolkata to migrants from Bangladesh, he is an Indian and hence grouped generally under Indian English writers. His father being a bureaucrat, he spent most of his childhood in travel. Yet, considering his own incredulity towards a national identity and its essentially fluid nature because he is in many ways a Bangladeshi or a Sri Lankan too as testified by him in an interview for the *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, he seems to occupy the status of a world writer. From a Poststructural aspect, where the corresponding author's function in determining the meaning of a work is debated, Ghosh's frequent switching between the roles of a writer and a character appear to diminish such distinctions. The significance of either writers' nationality or diasporic identity gets minimised in this respect.

In the prose piece "At Large in Burma", abbreviated as ALB hereafter, Ghosh describes his meeting with a militant Sonny, born to Indian parents settled in Burma, and exclaims that they could have been in each other's place but for a turn of fate. Ghosh's relatives who were settled in Burma decide to move to India owing to war whereas Sonny's ancestors stay there itself which causes all the difference in their

lives. These chance happenings which have shaped his life just like those of his characters, lend more qualms to the practice of grouping writers under particular segments. Following Ghosh's custom in his works, be it fiction or non-fiction, one may do justice to the writer by analyzing his works both in the background of World literature and that of Indian literature to obtain a vivid picture of the deliberations that he presents before the world-wide reading community. To substantiate this, it is notable that the "Indian-ness" resulting out of cultural familiarity is not specifically demarcated in most of his earlier works. He is dismissive of such concepts, in general. Moreover, apart from India, his works are spread over many locations like Middle East, London, America, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Cambodia, Malaysia, China etc and the Bay of Bengal, Arabian and Indian Oceans. These locations feature very frequently to the extent of being regarded as characters in his works.

The revolutionary subject matter of his works too, far from being pinned to a geographic location, is very broad and universal. Right from his questioning of popular notions in the field of science like reason and knowledge, the shifting systems of power and political boundaries initiated with and without colonisation and its impact on culture, environment and economy, issues of migration, climatic changes and increasing technological dependence resulting in surveillance strategies – to the devastating effects of these on individual existence, its depiction in history that undermines the role of imagination and memory – their relevance to a wider sphere than a peculiarly Indian one is corroborated. He researches on the politics and the colonial past of not just his homeland but also other countries unlike many Indian English and regional novelists. The advantage of the Indian authors writing in English over the regional writers – that of the accessibility of their works to more readers – is utilized by Ghosh to delve on common predicament rather than the culturally specific.

Unlike many of his post-independence counterparts he is able to retain the colonial reality at the fringes of his narrative, while ushering the questions around binaries like reason/passion etc, which are more relevant for future individual existence, to the mainstream.

The regional/national binary itself has been a matter of debate among the literary community where arguments regarding the marginalisation of writers based on their readership have stirred up discontent. In addition, classifications based on language and themes in a multicultural environment like that of India again pose challenges while using generic terms like “Indian Writing”, “Commonwealth Literature” etc. Many of the writers, including Ghosh, have made their stand clear against such categorization especially since many of them use the medium of a world language to create their prose pieces. In fact, Ghosh has acknowledged his devotion to V S Naipaul, who is regarded as a world writer rather than essentially Indian, in his own evolution as a writer. In an interview with Nicholas Wroe as cited online, he deliberates, “there is this flourishing and vibrant literary world in India. It is marvellous. I think it really began with Naipaul. He was the pioneer who created an audience for himself and for others that followed”. During childhood, his exposure to Richmal Crompton’s series, *Just William* and the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott initiated him to the world of imagination. He mentions his indebtedness further in the interview for *The Guardian* as Wroe notes:

> ‘Scott had a huge influence on many early 19th-century Indian writers and I found his books utterly absorbing and remember curling up in bed with them at boarding school.’ He was at the prestigious Doon School where Vikram Seth, a pupil a couple of years ahead of him, came back to teach and they talked a lot about writing to each other.

Other factors that helped him in his craft are his frequent travels, his family history of migration and stories from the colonial times narrated to him by his family members, his specialisation in anthropology which got him acquainted with other prominent writers turned anthropologists like E. E. Evans-Pritchard and his PhD supervisor Peter Lienhardt. Writers and particular works that inspired him in the course of his career include Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. *The Circle of Reason* (COR) has been influenced by Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* influenced *The Shadow Lines* (SL) in its structure. *The Glass Palace* (GP) and *In an Antique Land* (IAL) have been influenced by Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* and Bengali writer Syed Mustafa Ali respectively. Ghosh's discussions with teachers like Ashis Nandy and Jeetsingh Oberoi proved useful for *The Calcutta Chromosome* (CC) and many writers like Mahasweta Devi, Gopinath Mohanty, Sunil Gangopadhyaya, Graham Swift and Rainer Maria Rilke have inspired him with respect to *The Hungry Tide* (HT). Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* served as a model for the structure of his Trilogy. Apart from this comprehensive list he has also been motivated by the talent of Balzac, Tagore and Satyajit Ray as vouched by him time and again in many of his interviews. Ghosh's comment in his blog, while acknowledging the role of the Bengali writer Sunil Gangopadhyay in his career, points towards his suspicion of labels attached to writers. He recapitulates Gangopadhyay's vision thus, "literary life is lived in a kind of whirlpool, formed by the currents of many rivers" (Ghosh, Sunil) and hence it would be impractical to separate them and force uniformity. In addition there is "The Grandfather's Bookcase" in his ancestral home in Kolkata, mostly consisting of novels that nurtured the voluminous reader in him. Ghosh often refers to it as an early influence and it even becomes the subject of one of his essays, "The

Testimony of my Grandfather's Bookcase" (1998). This elucidates his preference for the novel genre as told to Lila Azam Zanganeh in an interview cited in the web, "the novel is important because it's such a complete form of utterance. It allows you to represent your utterance in all its nuances, in all its representative possibilities, in all its expressive possibilities in a way that nothing else can". In another instance, in an article for online edition of *Kenyon Review*, he further strengthens this engagement with fiction as he senses that "fiction had been thoroughly international for more than a century" (Ghosh, The March).

Other than novels, he has written many prose essays, articles and reviews that are written from a story teller's point of view which again implies the writer's mistrust of the binaries that tend to rule the society that he inhabits. For Ghosh, the separation between fiction and non-fiction is also quite subjective and a flawed one as the division that decides where reality ends and imagination begins or vice versa can never be perfect as perfection itself is an unachievable condition as the Postmodernists advocate. He has been steadfast in clarifying that though his novels are set in the backdrop of history, they are primarily focused on how individuals are affected by events and not the precise course of the events, which would be the concern of a historian and not a literary person. Many of these stories trace their origins to the stories of his Indian ancestors, the ones on which he grew up while in Kolkata. He is a writer who is as comfortable with his native language Bengali as with English. It is only because he feels less confident in his mastery of the complicated style and in depth knowledge of the idioms required of a writer that he is refraining from attempting works in Bengali. Yet, as he reports in his interviews, many people take his works to be translations in English owing to their rhythm typical of Bengali sentence constructions.

The tug of war between English and the native languages in India for ascendancy has been revealed futile considerably in the past few years as we have moulded and come to accept English just like any other Indian language. This transition is more probable in a multicultural setting like that of India because it is known to accommodate diverse cultures within its “boundary”. The flexibility inherent in English further accelerates the process. The popularity of Indian English writers throughout the world has always been a source of motivation for upcoming writers in the country for they too gain confidence that they will also be read. Even the regional writers are translated and read widely in many international languages in part due to the attention of the reading public directed towards Indian literary scene by the works of writers in English. The visibility promoted by such writers is testified as in the case of Ghosh whose debut novel is recognised for its merit for the first time not by India but by France where he still has a larger appeal. In the beginning of his career, his works got more reception from readers and publishers outside the country than those back home. Recently, with time, this statistics has reversed in that his books are sold more in India than elsewhere with minor variations in the case of particular books here and there. He clings to his Indian identity not because of its nationalist implications but because it is only a country like India that lets one live beyond any limitations of space, both mental and physical. It is not that being an Indian is easy; on the other hand it is because the complicated existence enriches one’s experiences so much so that one is able to grasp the surrounding realities in their full purport, which is denied to many others from their comfortable situations. Ghosh’s declaration in an interview with Claire Chambers that he is an Indian writer further strengthened by the recent Jnanpith in 2018, the highest literary honour in India, conferred on him more or less settles the debate regarding his status as an

Indian English writer. He is the first non-regional writer to receive the award. This is not just an achievement for him as a writer but the language, English, too which proves that it is gradually reconciling with the native languages almost to the point of sharing their regional status without each impinging on the others' discursive space. The function executed by the Indian multi-cultural scenario, as stated earlier, complemented by the potential of the Indian writers is no less significant in this respect.

Indian literature has been quite experimental right from the time of its evolution and has proved to be significant in its approach with the passage of time. In the genre of novel, starting right from the trio who set the ground for imagination to the innovative methodology employed by the contemporary writers, various themes have emerged to revitalise the Indian psyche and align it to the universal paradigm. Indian English literature has evolved as an integral part of the broader framework of English literature in the past few decades. It has succeeded in occupying a unique position for itself in this milieu with the works of such writers as Toru Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu, the great-trio – Muk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao in the past and recently through the works of Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, Rohinton Mistry, V.S. Naipaul, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Shashi Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Kiran Desai and Aravind Adiga to name a few. The authors who emerged in the eighties have provided new dimensions for Indian English literature by freeing it from the shackles of imitative writing. They were the ones who were ready to take up the challenges of experimenting with literature.

Ghosh is no exception in this regard as his works testify to the wealth of experience and research carried out elaborately to satisfy the reader's yearning, be it

Indian or foreign. The global attributes that feature in his writings are so profuse that the degree of identification is even for all the readers irrespective of their cultural differences. As his novels testify, especially SL*,* borders are meaningless unless the physically chartered lines start to convey intrinsic meaning to its people. Through his works, he has given new scope and possibilities for Indian English Literature. His works reflect the in depth research that goes into their creation and deal with so many themes and ideas that they stand apart from the works of the other writers. The works themselves appear to be vastly different from one another. In his works, he seems to be preoccupied with the expression of the predicament of the characters unrecorded in the historical arena. Individual characters are highlighted and given all attention. By presenting ordinary characters and rendering them with certain extraordinariness, he challenges their subaltern status.

Writers seek to evolve counter-representations to secure the rights of the marginalized groups. The represented groups' status as "subaltern" etymologically confers on them an inferior position. According to Ashcroft as detailed in *Post-colonial Transformation* (2001), Ghosh's characters alter their status through tactics and by acting as "critical organic catalyst". The richness and variety of his well-rounded characters have made them memorable in literature. As a part of doing field research for DPhil in Social Anthropology from Oxford University he visited Egypt, which later formed the basis for his work *In an Antique Land* (1992). His other major works include *The Circle of Reason* (1986), *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fevers, Delirium and Discovery* (1995), *Countdown (*1999*), The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Imam and the Indian* (2002), *The Hungry Tide* (2004), *Incendiary Circumstances* (2005), *Dancing in Cambodia and Other Essays* (2008). *Sea of Poppies* (2008) is the first volume of the Ibis Trilogy followed by *River of*

Smoke (2011), and *Flood of Fire* (2015). *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016), his recent non-fiction, deals with another vital issue that requires urgent attention. He has also published many essays and articles in *The New Yorker*, *The New Republic* and *The New York Times*. His latest novel, *Gun Island*, published in June 2019 demarcates his continuing preoccupation with the themes concerning social issues in a global scenario.

Ghosh has written for many publications and has served on the juries of several international film festivals. He is currently a full-fledged writer with his works translated to more than thirty languages. To mention a few of the awards, *The Shadow Lines* won both the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Ananda Puraskar. *The Calcutta Chromosome* won the Arthur C Clarke Award for 1997. The civilian honour, Padma Shri was awarded by the government of India in 2007. *Sea of Poppies* got shortlisted for the 2008 Man Booker Prize. He got elected as the Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 2009 and Ford Foundation Art of Change Fellow in 2015. *River of Smoke* got shortlisted for the Man Asian Literary Prize 2011. He has received two Lifetime Achievement awards. The magazine, *Foreign Policy*, enlisted him as one of the most important global thinkers of the preceding decade in 2019. As referred to earlier, the recent Jnanpith has extended the reach of his works, themes and characters in an essentially constructive manner.

In light of Ghosh's escalating popularity and the immediacy of the apprehensions and insights that his works impart, it is imperative to examine them closely and gain insight into the myriads of domains that each of his characters leads one through. Therefore, this thesis aims to analyse Ghosh's works in light of the ongoing subaltern discourse and also to examine how far he has succeeded in redefining/counter-defining the status of the subaltern through his individual

characters. The attempt will also be to identify the modes of resistance that enables the Other to accomplish speech-act. The underlying question is can one essentially use the term subaltern anymore? At the beginning stages of the subaltern discourse the subaltern status provided one an identity. Now that they have stated their claims and propositions, one more or less finds that this same 'identity' is being used against them. In that context, when they imbibe that term, which etymologically too establishes their inferior position, it might weaken their stand in the whole discourse. When it comes to his characters they seem to be deliberately questioning these limitations. The thrust is also on the relevance and new perspectives that his characters gain in the modern world and the issues thereby exposed.

The works covered in this study are *The Circle of Reason*, *The Shadow Lines, In an Antique Land*, *The Calcutta Chromosome*, *The Glass Palace*, *The Hungry Tide* and two prose pieces, "Dancing in Cambodia" and "At Large in Burma". There are some works that are not covered in this study like the *Ibis* Trilogy, his latest novel *The Gun Island*, the recent non-fiction on climate, other anthologies, articles, essays and reviews written by Ghosh. The published works of the author at the beginning of the research period have formed a part of this study which itself demand time consuming scrutinisation from various angles and present new perspectives in each of the reading and re-reading stages. The works analysed are in a way more directly related to his life and memories than those excluded. Migration in COR, nationalism and riots in SL, the Calcutta of Ross in CC, IAL born out of his PhD fieldwork, deliberations around colonialism and Burma of the stories that he grew up with in GP, the Sunderbans, its tigers and the water-front in HT that has close affiliations with his native place, the first-hand experiences depicted in travelogues like DIC and ALB, have all evolved from the fragments deposited in his observant mind over many years.

The Trilogy, on the other hand, is from a comparatively new sphere developed through conscious research undertaken by the author and materials collected with a purpose to create an untold story. In the case of the excluded anthologies, essays and articles, some of them are extensions of the research that form the background of the works under review. For example, essays like "The Imam and the Indian", "The Slave of MS H.6" etc. have direct connections with IAL and the others, being mostly non- fiction, deal with concrete facts that requires one to adopt a methodology different from the one chosen for the present study and some of them concern issues which have been already dealt with in the thesis when approached from the angle selected herein. So, to maintain a stable pattern, the works have been consciously selected in such a way that as per the general standards of classifying genre, there are five fictional works, two non- fiction and one that defies definite categorisation. The study on "fiction", the five novels, would trace the progress of the arguments broached through the study in relation to the realm of "imagination"; those of "non- fiction", two prose-pieces kept to a minimum so as not to over emphasise "reality", yet to strike a link with "facts" and finally, *In an Antique Land*, neither a fiction nor non- fiction, to hint at the intermittent shades without resorting to the binaries that are exposed in the course of the analysis and the interpretations arrived at. This seems appropriate for the resolution of the hypothesis raised through this research – that of how to counter the negative connotations of certain groupings and to initiate the process of redefining one's identity by asserting existence rather than deliberating on nonexistence and adopting a self-destructive stance.

Thus this study aims to delve deeper into the themes and ideas dealt with in the selected works of Ghosh with specific reference to the representation of the Other

or the subaltern because the Other in his works seems to be empowered to the point of destabilising the dominators. They seem to gain the focal point, whether it is Alu, Balaram and Zindi in COR; Narrator and Ila in SL; the Slave of MS H.6 and Ghosh himself in IAL; Mangala and Murugan in CC; Arjun and Dinu in GP; Fokir, Kusum, creatures like crabs, dolphins and places such as islands in HT; and CheaSamy or the art form represented by her in DIC and democracy represented through Aung San Suu Kyi in ALB. This is partly achievable because of the underlying structure of the society that necessitates frequent shifts in positions of power depending on the essential system wherein no one faction can claim permanent authority in the face of rebelling forces. Even if they do, the degree of invasion can be checked to an extent by initiating tactics to counter strategies as gradually unfolded through this study.

The procedure to be adopted for this research involves a close study of each of Ghosh's characters in the selected works with reference to their marginal status, yet how they are so represented as to become the subjects rather than the objects of history, as Anshuman Mondal points out. This may also involve evaluating them taking into account several critical theories and techniques as and when required like post colonialism, which again is an often scrutinised term, since the subaltern studies is an integral part of this theory. In addition, such theories like Deconstruction, Orientalism, and Discourse Analysis can also be relied on to provide a better perspective for this study because of the subaltern historians' increasing affinity towards literary and cultural studies. This would include theorists like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Michel Foucault, Edward W. Said, Bill Ashcroft, Homi Bhabha, and those belonging to the Subaltern Studies Collective in the early 1980s. As such any study would be incomplete without a close examination of its relation and functions within the broader framework that it is part of.

When one considers the critical studies on Ghosh's work that have so far emerged, one finds that till now his works have been studied with reference to their post colonial and postmodern aspects, historicity, nationalism and diasporic representations. This study is aimed at unravelling just the opposite, that is, how far his characters emerge as individuals when they are relieved of a theoretical foundation. The dependence on theory need not correspond to its intrinsic validity in determining functions. Upon considering the emergence and practice of Theories, it divulges a scenario where one idea has often been propounded to lead to other substantiating or often, contesting ideas. Such an exercise can be mutually rewarding for the theory and the Subject. Ultimately one side should not burden the other or lead to the construction of an opponent quite opposed to the initial goals. Thus the endeavour is to locate the "theory inside theory", to be precise, to comprehend the critical stand adopted by the marginalised while situating the study in theories those speak for them and against them. The methodologies followed thus far, in majority, appear to substantiate the theories employed rather than to lead to newer pertinent ones.

Critical works available on Ghosh are meagre compared to the magnum opus of his works. Even among these the ones that include most of his works and highlight a specific theme or motif have not been done on a grand scale. They have mostly appeared in the form of journal articles and the like. It is the urgency of time to give way for more Indian critical works on a writer so inseparable a part of Indian consciousness as Ghosh is. To mention a few critical works on Ghosh – Tabish Khair (2003), John Thieme (2004) John C. Hawley (2005), and Brinda Bose (2005) have each written books titled *Amitav Ghosh*. Also, Anshuman A. Mondal's (2010) work with the same title has been written as part of *Contemporary World Writers* series.

Apart from these, some short articles have appeared time and again like Agarwalla's "Magic Realism in Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason*," Bagchi's "The Process of Validation in Relation to Materiality and Historical Reconstruction in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*," Batra's "Geographical and Generic Traversings in the Writings of Amitav Ghosh" and so forth. Then there is an unpublished PhD dissertation by Claire Chambers titled "The Relationship between Knowledge and Power in the Work of Amitav Ghosh." Most of these works have either been studies on his individual works by applying critical theories to it or a critical overview of the writer and his works in general. The multicultural background of the Indian English writers demands a highly sensitive procedure that preserves the uniqueness of their works while sustaining the theoretical base.

Many of the contemporary Indian English writers are people who live outside India. Yet they set their story against the canvas of the Indian society, Indian characters and their psyche, Indian culture and so on. They have more often been penalised on account of this lack of rootedness. Critics have generally overlooked the fact that the wider perspective gained from their stay outside and experience with other cultures give them a greater and much deeper insight into the problems peculiar to Indian community. In this sense they are not essentially diasporic or writers in exile. This has been proved by the many awards and distinctions added to Indian English literature through their works. The characteristic that makes Ghosh distinctive among his counterparts is the way he approaches each of his works. Writers often conduct research as part of the creative process, but this is more or less restricted to the available resources and within the limitations of language and temporality. Most of them sometimes get diverted towards the historians' path or lose track. For Ghosh,

the individual character he visualises in a particular time and space motivates him to travel with them to the depths of the past surpassing the earlier mentioned limitations.

This is conspicuous when one considers his works right from the beginning. If anything, this has only been augmented in his later works. His efforts to learn Judae-Arabic to read the original manuscripts in the archives of various museums to retrieve data regarding The Slave of MS H.6 and Cantonese for his latest Trilogy stand unparalleled in literature. These languages are almost extinct which makes achieving mastery over them an impossible task and the periods on which he is researching belong to a distant past when documentation was rudimentary and in the form of written manuscripts, the dialects of which have been wiped out. Still, this is not an impediment for him in collecting almost all the primary and secondary sources available. This sort of extensive research aids him in not just doing justice to the age and the culture that it represents but it is also reflected in the attention to minute detail in the formation of characters like their behaviour, dressing and exactness of language so that the readers also find themselves taken to another era altogether. Those who are close to these cultures identify the voices depicted in his works as if they could hear them directly. Such is the extent to which the author transforms the exhumed data enlivening them into human forms. Ghosh's fluency in Bengali, Hindi, English, Arabic and French like his character Kanai in HT and to an extent Judae Arabic and Cantonese bear proof to his diligence as a writer and the genuineness of his characters.

COR, the first of his novels, sketches the journey of an orphan Alu through places like Lalpukur, Calcutta, Kerala, the Middle East and Algeria. His weaving loom serves as a symbol of universality just like the narrative woven across varied cultures so as to unite them explicitly. The traditional market place, the *Souq* of al-

Ghazira, is a place where many worlds converge as the migrant labourers have made it their home. The hybridised culture born out of cross-cultural contacts renders a circular pattern to the narrative that questions temporal considerations of dominance through colonisation, science and technology.

SL is a polyphonic novel which subverts the classical narrative structure by representing one incident from varied perspectives thereby providing interpretative spaces for the conscious reader. Hence it can be considered as an attempt at unravelling the power functions behind ostensibly ingenuous matters. It questions the tangibility of borders; both between nations and the ones that separate history/memory, reality/imagination, fact/ fiction and boldly asserts that such artificial boundaries, if any, are to be crossed in order to fulfil the ultimate human purpose of lived-experiences. Ghosh's success in effectively conveying this repudiation of binary oppositions is evident through Dixon's words:

> Classical ethnography assumes that the culture of the Western observer is a stable and coherent point from which to observe native society. Ghosh undermines this notion by depicting Britain at war with Germany, so that Partition takes place against the background of an equally unstable Europe. The parallels between England and Germany, and India and Pakistan effectively undermine any distinction between East and West, colony and metropolis, and point to similarities and continuities that cut across these differences. (18)

IAL is undoubtedly a giant leap towards unconventionality by mixing genres. Author's first-hand experiences while doing field research in Egypt for his doctoral programme is intermingled with fictionalised episodes of cultural exchanges. It is set for a major part in Cairo unlike the other works where India occupies a major part of

the setting. Ghosh's preoccupation as an ethnographer doing anthropological research resulting in a work of semi fiction like travelogue confounds the reader, yet informs him of the fluidity of the differences that demarcate these fields. It also takes an investigative turn when the author-narrator embarks on a probe to restore the identity of a slave from the ruins of history punctuated with trade relations between countries and cultures hitherto strange to each other. The identity, starting right from the name, has to be reclaimed for the subaltern. Hawley describes this attempt as a "syncretic leap across centuries" (102).

CC is an example for his attempt to challenge the non-eastern discourses that approach the "Other" and the related "irrationalities" from a suspicious point of view. Though categorised as science fiction, as typical of Ghosh, this work of fiction surpasses the others in the same genre in that, here it is precisely the subaltern consciousness that finds voice which anywhere else would have been sidelined. It is interesting to note that Ghosh achieves this objective through Ronald Ross who made a major breakthrough research in science by finding a cure for Malaria. Ross's stay in India for this purpose and his partial knowledge of local culture and folklore rendered this possible for him. The contrast in the attitude towards "knowledge" of the West and the East is highlighted in the novel thereby privileging the eastern narrative over the western.

In the travelogue DIC, Ghosh recounts the rise of Saloth Sar from the role of a casual occupant of the palace, hailing from a remote village to the dictator Pol Pot, whose cruelty ruptured the Cambodian psyche. He exposes the sly operation of colonial forces that turns one against one's own culture. Travelogue opens up avenues for the self to interact with the other and to further accommodate the diverse cords. This interaction should not be at the cost of any culture, but a mutual dialogue that

enables one to become strongly rooted in one's own culture. In his essay ALB, Ghosh traces the decline of which could have been one of the promising countries in South-east Asia, Burma. Nearly twenty years after the publication of this essay, Burma's political scenario has taken a turn towards democracy with NLD securing more than eighty percent of the seats in parliament. Still the prospects are not very bright as the quarter of the seats are reserved for the military; with full control over the police, the defence budget and most parts of the economy. The problems of the Rohingya minority are another pertinent factor coming up in the recent scenario. Taking all these into account, one could conclude that it is not really a country or a powerful section of a society that threatens its very own existence but the concept of nationalism itself that tries to forge an improbable identity for the people as a whole.

GP is the saga of individuals torn between colonial depictions of one's bond with nation as a symbol and intuitive approaches that prioritise personal over the national. Rajkumar and Dolly stand for the latter while Arjun falls prey to the British's manipulation of nationalist ideals. Uma, on the other hand immerses herself in securing complete freedom although it involves sacrifices. Without taking sides, the author realistically portrays the damaged strings in relationships predicting wider repercussions both for the individual and the nation. Ghosh's Bengali upbringing and the stories of his ancestors as migrants and refugees have influenced his literary psyche to such an extent that some of it finds expression in his oeuvre.

In HT, Ghosh adeptly delineates the plight of the tide country people from the Sundarbans, who are left homeless after the Partition. The futility of the settlement camps forces them to settle in the large empty Morichjhápi Island, fending for themselves. The government, intend upon evacuating them, citing threat to the richest ecological reserve, is set in contrast to the refugees who represent the disinherited. In

1978 several Dalits fleeing from the atrocities of the so called “resettlement” camps of the government, decide to settle in their homeland, the tide country from where they had to leave as a result of the war. They, who made the land inhabitable, are now termed ‘refugees’ and ‘land- grabbers’ and ‘squatters.’ The *bhatirdesh* people have evolved their own gods, myths and stories to suit their environment. This clash between the powerful and the powerless is satirised by placing it along the other expeditions that led to the clearing of mangrove forests in islands like Lusibari.

The *Ibis* Trilogy also shares similar concerns. People from different cultural backgrounds are portrayed in a way that it instigates the possibility of a new race resulting out of certain cultural encounters. Then there is the *Ibis*, the ship headed towards Mauritius Island carrying coolies and convicts. Thus it turns out to be a cultural utopia where all barriers of culture are laid defenceless when confronted with humanitarian ethics. Poppies are apt symbols of cross-cultural encounters because they themselves have attainted significant position in the global market to the point of becoming *sine qua non*. The opium industry thrives on its market in countries like China, which has to pay a huge price for its trade relationship with other countries. At first though it holds a lot of promise, the grip on the market slowly spreads on to the politics of the country in question as in the case of India leading on to a complete domination.

The process by which the aforementioned political, economic and cultural connections between countries have been made possible is called transnationalism, a term coined in the early twentieth century. From being a way of life contained within a geographical location peculiar to a society, with increasing migratory tendencies and globalisation, culture has evolved into a mixture of practices that have transcended borders. Economic transnationalism, capitalist transnationalism, transnational

activism are a few of its varieties. These elements can be discerned in all the tales under study too. The allegorical work, COR, presents a police officer Jyoti Das chasing an alleged terrorist Alu through places that eventually lead to the transformation of their own psyche. The relationship between Tridib/Narrator – May, Nick-Ila and the way May, a foreigner, connects to an elderly refugee culminating in Tridib's murder in SL defies cultural connotations. The past few decades have witnessed culture being progressively displaced through human activities.

The East has always been featured as mimicking the West and the flow of ideas, often a one-way process with the former at the receiving end. Uma Verma in COR teaches the scientifically oriented community represented by Dr Mishra the real import of rituals and practices followed by people by successfully completing his challenge of cremating Kulfi's body in Algeria as customs require. She also succeeds in organising a drama based on Indian mythology in that foreign land. Mishra's condition that the roles should be played by Indians seems unachievable considering the less number of Indians there, that too of the appropriate age group demanded by the play. It is here the author provides a twist with the entry of Zindi and her team, disguised as a family, to seek shelter from Police. Ironically, the officer Das too ends up being one of the lead characters in her play and falls in love with Kulfi. It is not just to heighten the dramatic effect that Ghosh conjoins the pursuer and the pursued. The hollowness behind the apparent disinterest in the practices of a region except for its entertainment value is exposed here. This is similar to "the final redemptive mystery" (SL 252) that Tridib's death uncovers before the readers. The price of each human life in a divided world may be other innocent lives. When confronted with the dilemma of either risking his life or proving himself to be selfish, Tridib chooses the former. He supports his lover in her attempt to save an old man from fanatics and it is

the same “loafer” Tridib, as *Tha’mma* prefers to term him, who sets a supreme model for humanity.

CC questions the biased approach by privileging counter-science and fixing the master narratives within a regional framework, to be tampered and devised to achieve their purpose. Thus intellect travels, in this instance, from the Other to the dominant discursive spaces. Similarly, IAL also sketches the appropriation of valuable cultural documents from the Synagogue of Ben Ezra in Cairo to the European and American libraries so as to obliterate its rich past. Piya, in HT, with her mixed identity moves back and forth between India and America, in a way, to experience the stability in the natural environment through researching on a variety of dolphin – a stability that is lacking in her species. DIC, ALB and GP shows how in different time periods and contexts, the dominators are threatened even by the presence of the “powerless”, why many of the Kings, leaders and artists are either exiled or murdered and tortured in order to ascertain hold over the colonies. In the end, the coloniser is taught a lesson that the world runs on intrinsic will power and hope and not on constructed realities. The Trilogy too is no exception in highlighting cultural communion by drawing strongly from ancient trade links between India and China.

The merging of cultures has led to acculturation. Initially it is questioned and viewed with suspicion, but it also leaves scope for acceptance in the future owing to the inevitability of global encounters happening on a large scale. Though critics, like Plato in *Laws*, have considered the sanctity of cultures a prerequisite necessitating a check to be maintained on acculturation; in the recent times with increasing tendencies to oppress and establish supremacy, only such a process of destabilisation, taken positively, can restore balance to cultures and free them from power circles. The

novels of Ghosh accentuate this remarkable turn to be realised by all cultures, a sort of deterritorialisation wherein the bond between culture and a place is loosened after it is originated. This move from the origins opposes the basic rootedness of cultures affording a sort of balancing strategy to reclaim the rights of the majority from the oppressed cultures throughout the world.

Indian Writing in English has opened new avenues for its world-wide readers– a plethora of lands conquered through abundant imagination. It is no more just Indians writing about their homeland for the benefit of foreign readers, but also unfolding the world itself before the world audience irrespective of territorial limitations or impositions. This has been partly made possible because of India's diversity – being heterogeneous is a part of the country's everyday reality unlike many others. At the same time the writers have skilfully adapted the general issues related to methods of knowing, power, colonial past, nature, gender issues and subalternity to suit the particular reality of the Indian subconscious. These are shared concerns irrespective of regional barriers. The Indian readers also have a feeling of inclusion when the typically territorial aspects get universalised through eminent writers. Language can be one important vehicle through which the regional culture is internalised with reverence to the soil that it is part of and without suspiciously categorizing it as an object of study. This breakthrough shift from being the observed to the one that provides challenging matter to be imbibed is consequential. The *Ibis* Chrestomathy emerging out of the second book of the trilogy; serving as a glossary to the mixing of Hindi, Chinese, Cantonese, Mauritian Creole, pidgin and a variety of Indian languages – is a dictionary in itself where the Orient has included words to find an original voice that cannot go unheard.

Cross-cultural encounters can be of different types: some with a view to dominate the other culture, some others on an equal plane where no culture is superior or inferior to the other. It is the latter that mostly finds expression in Ghosh's works. All the theoretical experimentations which have been restricted to the writers of the West or the privileged ones have now been successfully adapted by Indian writers too which has indisputably lead to its exaltation as a part of world literature. The experimentations in narrative strategy have diminished the fictive elements making it more palpable. In fact, the multicultural outlook evident in his novels qualifies them to be a part of the world literary deliberations. The setting, the focus on the international trade and political relations, cultural transference, all of these analysed in these novels endow them worldly status. They can no more be termed just "shadow lines" but are apt to be together called a "hungry tide", to borrow from Ghosh's titles, waiting to pour forth making the world realise that it is a force to reckon with.

Thus a writer like Ghosh deserves due exploration in this context. His works deal with in detail almost all the aspects in our present scenario whether it is concerning issues like identity crisis and individual psyche on a personal level or politics and culture on a social level. His peculiarity is that he uses the individual consciousness to build up the social consciousness. Thus it is often the neglected individual who becomes central in his works. The Other or the subaltern gains prominence here, thus opening up a wide range of new discourses which are quite unique from those dealt with till now. By precisely questioning the boundaries his characters surpass them, which is a unique feature of his individual characters hitherto unexamined. In such a sense they almost cease to be the Other. It is an undisputed fact that even the issues of nationalism, history, post colonialism and postmodernism are brought forward to give a circularity to the lives of the individual characters or the

subalterns but at the same time making them less of a subaltern at least through his works. This in itself is no less a feat.

This can be considered as a first step towards liberation from hegemony. When one becomes aware of the presence of dominators after the initial struggle, a time comes when one has to get over the idea of dominance oneself and assert ones individuality and freedom instead of complaining. It is only then that one can expect to be heard. That is the peculiarity of Ghosh's characters – they make themselves heard and appear to revive their situation. In most cases, like their author, they are also engaged in a sojourn so that geographically too they do not face any restrictions. Even if they do, they battle against such dominating forces and emerge victorious in the end, hence the need to replace the subaltern. In theoretical terms, this may appear unacceptable because once they acquire voice, they are deemed "unqualified" to fall in the category of "subaltern". What goes overlooked here is how a position shifts from one that is detested to that of "aspired" for. Is it because of the recognition that power can now be discreetly obtained through the same labels that once sealed many human lives? If so, this is a dangerous reversal of power centres because this would diminish the worth of individuals and communities that are yet to master the lopsided world order. It is this tendency that this thesis strives to demystify – the label acting as beneficial for some and disadvantageous for the others. This will require a "redefinition of the subaltern discourse", that the title suggests, to make people first accept that they are not the dispossessed but very much the possessed or in the process of reaching that stage. It is along these lines that Ghosh has moulded his characters. They demonstrate that sharing the opportunities with others/Others is a cycle that need not remain stagnant. Secondly, the quandary of the voiceless, that of overcoming the label also needs to be effectively dealt with. This could be quite an

enervating task in the contemporary world marked by the spurting of more and more disruptive alliances. Although many studies have already been done and many are ongoing with regard to Ghosh's works, their relevance in the subaltern discourse from such a radical yet imperative standpoint is yet to be studied on a comprehensive scale. Thus this research aims to fill this gap in the study of his works done so far.

The thesis has been divided into five chapters. The first chapter, introduction, covers a brief survey of Indian Writing in English, traces the relevance of Amitav Ghosh in Indian English Literature and considers his position as a world writer, states the significance of the present study by analyzing the previous work done in this area, and elucidates the critical methodology applied for the study. Chapter II titled "Effacing Structures: Exploring the Key Terms" is an exposition of the key theoretical terms employed in the title like "subaltern," "discourse," "representation," and "Other." It also establishes a theoretical background for the arguments raised in the thesis. Chapter III, "Contesting Oblivion: Recovered Identities in Ghosh's Oeuvre" provides a detailed review of all the subaltern characters and the methods developed by the subalterns to reclaim their rights. Other relevant themes and issues emerging through the works under study are also outlined. Chapter IV is titled "The Muted Terminology: Altered Margins and Redefined Narrative". It initiates new ways of thinking with respect to subaltern predicament and also substantiates the urgency of implementing such a shift. It also attempts to prove the effectiveness and importance of the central argument with examples from the works under study by employing theoretical perspectives to augment the central position. The concluding chapter presents the findings to reinstate the impact of the inquiry. The significance of literature in reviving the situation is explored through Ghosh's works with due critical foundation.

PRATHIBHA P “ REDEFINING SUBALTERN DISCOURSE: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE OTHER IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF AMITAV GHOSH. “ THESIS. PG DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND RESEARCH CENTRE ,VIMALA COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), THRISSUR, UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT, 2019.

CHAPTER II

EFFACING STRUCTURES: EXPLORING THE KEY TERMS

I am thinking where I am not, therefore I am where I am not thinking.

(Lacan 518)

The psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's reversal of Cartesian philosophy aptly points towards the transitory nature of meaning that individuals attribute to things and people around them. It is when such postulation or thinking ceases that one really begins to try to make sense of the reality. All the theoretical analyses from the beginning have thus been weighed down by narrow considerations of power and consensus. In a way they have been prey to their own theorizing as thoughts themselves hamper the otherwise smooth comprehension of situation or else they complicate the process of arriving at conclusions. Yet, criticism has initiated modes of opposition against ascendant tendencies of authoritarian regimes. The starting point that it provides can be favourably utilized to claim one's position so as not to be treated as secondary. This necessitates employing theory to counter one-sided ideological attack aimed at obliterating the existence of a few.

Subaltern is one such offshoot of a theory aimed at uncovering a presence denied by colonial historical accounts. In its origin, it meant junior ranking officers in the British army. Most of them, often unnamed, lost lives in the battles as they stood in the front row whereas all the credit went to the senior officers who were duly acknowledged in records. In the early twentieth century, Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci expanded its meaning to include the proletariat and other social groups who were outside the structures of political organisations as mentioned in his *Prison*

Notebooks, written during Mussolini's fascist rule in Italy. His concerns were centred on the rural peasants of Southern Italy who were kept out of the power politics and made to slave for the ruling class. The term; later adopted by the Subaltern Studies collective in the early 1980s, to denote the rural peasants and untouchables in the post-independent India, gained impetus through the articles of many thinkers. A peasant rebellion against the government in West Bengal in 1967 impelled a few academics to fight for their cause. Since a true narration of their revolt is absent, the group directed their critique towards the "elite historical representation" (Morton 51). The prominent founding scholars of Subaltern Studies (SS) include Shahid Amin, David Arnold, Partha Chatterjee, the founding editor Ranajit Guha, Gautam Bhadra, Dipesh Chakrabarty, David Hardiman and Gyanendra Pandey. They tried to discover the typically Indian subalternity through their research and to narrate those accounts of history termed "history from below" by examining, as Guha proposes, "those cuts, seams and stitches –those cobbling marks –which tell us about the material it is made of and the manner of its absorption into the fabric of writing" (A Subaltern 3). Amitav Ghosh contributed a detailed research paper titled "The Slave of MS. H.6" to the seventh volume of their project in 1993. Divided into fifteen parts and running to around sixty pages, Ghosh succeeds in recovering the identity of the slave, Bomma, of a merchant Abraham Ben Yiju of Mangalore. The mention of the slave occurs in a few letters written by another merchant from Cairo, Khalaf Ibn Ishaq to Ben Yiju. A part of this appeared in Ghosh's work IAL. The Collective has published ten volumes in total amounting to hundreds of essays that deal with the lives of the underprivileged:

> Following the publication in 1983 of *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* by Ranajit Guha, a Bengali historian, Indian

> Subaltern Studies became visible in India. If traditional historians addressed the progress of the state, Guha and the other Subalternists wrote about the activities of those peripheralized by the state; if the one used "event history," the other used myth and legend, if the one homogenized, the other particularized, if the one praised the development of nationalism, the other found its faults. (Gran 1)

Their purpose to bring the underprivileged to the forefront was questioned by the critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak for failing to include women's issues. She also challenged its efficacy in achieving the stated objective of improving the condition of its subjects as it seemed to be an impossible task to her unless a paradigm shift in established structure facilitates receptive intellectuals to listen to their original voice. Thus the term, from its initial usage in a military context to a historical reference in the works of South Asian historiography, has reached through the works of Spivak, at a political connotation implying suppression of certain identities. Any attempt to foreground them may be self destructive, according to Spivak, as the society lacks the knowledge to interpret their experiences. It is this paradox that undermines each developmental enterprise. The "privileges" and "concessions" in lieu of the injustice meted out to them are severely criticised for assuming a false collaborative perspective. As Morton states, Spivak's deconstructive approach to this practice of the SS group, exposed the failure of applying Marxist tools to represent subaltern issues. In the Indian scenario where colonialism was replaced by capitalism, such a political stance can only re-create a "sovereign subaltern subject" (53). She further underlines that only a literary representation heedless of historical acuteness can hope to revitalise subaltern psyche by drawing their plight more effectively.

While SS historians are uncertain of this restoration in the subaltern situation, Spivak is a bit more positive in her consideration, which discloses possibilities of change in their status. These find expression in her controversial essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" which was originally titled "Power, Desire and Interest," first published in the Journal *Wedge* (1985) and later reprinted in the collection *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (1988). Another revised version of the essay appeared in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (1999).In this essay, Spivak cites through the case studies of Rani of Sirmur and Bhubaneswari Bhaduri, how the subaltern practices are scorned by the colonisers and in the name of securing their rights, prevent them from fulfilling their own choices, even if it involves getting burned to death in the funeral pyre of one's husband because as Susie Tharu ironically notes, this could have been an easier death for the subjugated women compared to the agony of slow death they would have had to put themselves to had they lived. Spivak asserts that this widow self-immolation could have been the first instance when the widow could actually voice her dissent, but unfortunately it also became her final attempt to give vent to her anguish.

The colonial forces saw this as a means to scorn the native, whereas if viewed from the perspective of religious scriptures, it is a sacred act. Hence rather than a suicidal attempt that qualifies to be disdained, the widow here rises to the status of a martyr –to be celebrated and emulated. Through *Sati*, Spivak illustrates how speaking for the subaltern undergoes reversal as the position of the speaker changes, depending on whether the speaker is a coloniser or a believer. In both the cases, though the widow as a subaltern gains focal point, the ideology working behind it is selfish rather than a humanitarian one. Speech becomes effective only when it is heard, thus fulfilling the speech-act. Critics state that the subaltern women have spoken in the

past and continue to do so, but Spivak emphasises the fact that these can be effective only if they are heard on equal grounds. An apt disciple of Derrida, she goes on to reiterate that their silence could be a chosen one and not imposed as they may not want to be a prey to the dominant order by using its apparatus to depict their unique position. Consequently, speech would be self-annihilating for them. Spivak accentuates here that any marginalised group will not just qualify to be called subaltern unless they are denied the agency to voice their struggles. Inability to speak without agency and the case of those indisposed to speak has to be clearly differentiated. The latter is not really a matter of "subalternity," but a lapse in ideological position.

Spivak cautions against "the danger of appropriating the other by assimilation" ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 308). Silencing, or rather the inability to speak is a crucial position for Spivak which implies being alert to the threats involved in being represented which can be more debilitating than the earlier non-existent state, especially so when the SS stresses on the differences, like the structuralists, to construct the subaltern. Spivak did not use the word "speak" literally. They might speak or utter, but the environment is not conducive for them to get heard is her central debate. In her essay, she makes an attempt to sketch a widow's psychobiography. At the same time she lashes against the tendency to universalise women's experience. The life of the women from the East is totally different from that of the West. The former has to face more layers of oppression in the form of race and class apart from the gender oppression faced by the latter. She uses the term "subaltern" initially to refer to the people who have been denied their rights without situating them in any class structure. Also, the definition of the subaltern, when it

comes to women should be expanded to include not just those belonging to lower classes but also from the upper classes.

Spivak has been often criticised for the inaccessibility of her writing style, but she defends herself by demonstrating that what is considered simple and comprehensible is that which always adheres to the colonial language. The language of the exploited cannot be simple as it involves embedded networks of communication, which is often labelled "non systematic" and "against conventions." Spivak goes on to establish that "plain prose cheats" (Morton 6) in the case of native consciousness. Their situation cannot be alleviated by discussing about their problems in intellectual circles. Literature, which has proved to influence minds, can be of help to recover subaltern identity. Where politics fails due to distorted ideology, literature can redeem the situation by depicting individual stories, without generalizing them, on a broader framework of the narrative strategy as in the works of writers like Ghosh. Ashcroft et al. writes in *The Empire Writes Back*, ". . . the emergence of indigenous theories in monoglossic settler cultures has also been linked to the question of language, of constructing a 'unique' voice, distinct from the language of the centre. (116)

Spivak has translated many of the works of Mahasweta Devi with this objective in mind. This, for her, has been an enriching experience not just for the sake of the subaltern but also for her own as it is a learning experience for her too as she cites in the interview published in *The Spivak Reader*:

> …finding the subaltern is not so hard, but actually entering into a responsibility structure with the subaltern, with responses flowing both ways: learning to learn without this quick-fix frenzy of doing good with an implicit

> assumption of cultural supremacy which is legitimized by unexamined romanticization…. (Landry 293)

Edward Said, the champion of Orientalism, defined sublternity as a "dreadful secondariness" (qtd. in Gandhi 207). He did extensive theorizing of the way the orient is fabricated, the principles of which was laid down by the ancient Christian scholar, John of Damascus. Spivak, his colleague, praised Said's *Orientalism* for its intensive and just treatment of subalternity, "the study of colonial discourse, directly released by work such as Said's has … blossomed into a garden where the marginal can speak and be spoken, even spoken for" (*Outside in the Teaching Machine* 56). Said's "Orient" is the synonym of the subaltern or the Other. He investigated the ways in which the West/Occident produced the Orient through appropriating knowledge systems and cultural artefacts. Does this strategic "production" command one's attention to the fact that the Orient does not exist, instead it is created by the egocentric Self to validate its authority? In that case, the whole question of the subaltern without a voice is a temporary concept, contrived for convenience, to be shattered by the educated people among the deprived communities. After its first usage, in the subsequent periods, it has been loaded with theory so much in its application that it is no more an impartial reference point. In fact, the subaltern itself must cease to exist to destabilise the powerful/powerless dichotomy.

Spivak too contemplates this as hinted in an interview, "the word 'subaltern' is losing its definitive power because it has become a kind of buzzword for any group that wants something that it does not have" (*The Spivak Reader* 290). While it is the significance of the word being questioned in the above quote, in another instance she questions its rationale itself, "'Why not develop a certain degree of rage against the history that has written such an abject script for you that you are silenced?' Then you

begin to investigate what it is that silences you, rather than take this very deterministic position – since my skin colour is this, since my sex is this, I cannot speak." (qtd. in *The Spivak Reader* 5)

"This very deterministic position" that Spivak assigns in the above quote cannot be evaded easily either by revolting against it or by any sort of "representation." In this context, Spivak reveals two meanings of representation in the German language –*Vertretung*, meaning political or being in the person's shoe and *Darstellung*, meaning artistic or "placing there." When the latter is mistakenly identified with the former, it turns out to be a problem of representation. Thus she, in a way, bestows "innocence" on all artistic representations in fiction, something similar to poetic license formulated in the earlier period. Contrary to this, "Abdul R. JanMohamed stresses the importance, as does Lamming, of the literary text as a site of cultural control and as a highly effective instrumentality for the determination of the 'native' by fixing him/her under the sign" (qtd. in *The Post- Colonial Studies Reader* 9). The contradictory position outlined here arises out of a misplaced generalisation on the part of the critics quoted, a hasty conviction of writers' intention. By specifically framing literary texts as the site for the altercation between the native and the foreign, these critics have "sanctified" history. The only saving factor could be the exclusion of fiction from the blame because it reserves the right to employ imaginative faculty and if that misreads identity, then it is upon the readers to negate its influence. An opposition raised here possibly will be what if this aligns with the interest of the majority readers? Here it would be worthwhile to remember that at present, as in the past, the situation to be dealt with, as Kunhaman states, is the battle between "cash-rich minority and a cash-poor majority." That is why the minority had to exercise ideological control through discursive practices of manipulating culture;

especially language, as Althusser substantiates, in order to materialise the figure of the Other and to cultivate consent.

Phenomenology defines Other as being opposite to the Self, that is the "authentic" element. Hence the Other resists conforming to the rules drafted by the society. This, while it relegates the Other to the margin, also leaves scope for resistance/dissent. Left with a choice – either to conform or to get de-centred, it chooses the latter. From the self's perspective it appears to be a failure but as long as it retains its identity, it cannot be subalternised/Othered completely as it always reserves the possibility of reclaiming its position. This could be defined as a position of differences and not one of subordination, "The colonised has to be seen not as an other, but as a difference –a difference in language, colour or culture" (Thomas 37). Later the "Othering" continued not just in colonial circles, but wherever one needed to exercise power to subdue certain differences that can otherwise pose threat to the Self. This process even though gained impetus during the imperial period, has its roots in the distant past when humans began their journey; albeit it got a name only later.

George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel introduced the concept of Other in late eighteenth century following the lines of Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Later on, many theorists and philosophers like Edmund Husserl, Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir have applied the concept to their respective fields. It was Jacques Lacan and Emmanuel Levinas who established the present definition of the Other as the "radical counterpart of the self" (Other). Here especially the ethical proposition of Levinas is crucial and relevant because he considers the Other as "superior and prior to the self." Thus in his terminology, the Other is not essentially a diminutive/negative, but a stronger culmination of the self. The Other does not need the self, but it is actually the self that needs the Other to authenticate its own existence, "Just as the bourgeoisie

proposes an image of the proletariat, the existence of the colonizer requires that an image of the colonized be suggested" (Memmi 123). The Tunisian anti-colonial revolutionary Albert Memmi here envisages the need to demystify the discourse that creates the Other so as to incapacitate the colonizer. It is through discourse mechanisms that the otherwise agreeable "Self" and the "Other" become combating forces.

The Oxford Dictionary traces the origin of "Discourse" to Latin language in which it means "running to and fro." Initially, it seems to have been envisaged as a two-way process between individuals. In French, it has an equivalent in *discours*, which simply means "speech." It is Michel Foucault, the French philosopher, who developed the theory of discourse further in his work *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972). Surpassing the traditional sense of the term, it has emerged as one of the key aspects of colonisation through his exposition. In simple terms, its major concern is the scrutiny of the factors that contribute to the creation of subjectivity, that which constitutes the world and its phenomena to a person. Discourse determines identity formation and societal structures. It can also develop its own sub-sections like "discourse of youth," "discourse of race" and so on. For Foucault, discourse consists of unwritten rules and structures that shape behavioural patterns in a society. Interestingly, though, he is interested in the articulation of those rules rather than their effect since it is through the manner in which the rules are conveyed that they turn out to be the actual controlling forces in a culture. Discourse organizes "reality" for people indirectly without making its working conspicuous.

In *The Order of Discourse* (1981), he explores "notion of exclusion," or rejection of certain rituals as fake, at the same time deliberate inclusion of certain others into the fabric of accepted norms. Foucault is trying to analyze what the

discursive spaces have excluded. In addition, “constraint” and “restriction” are two criterions involved in his discursive exercise. “Constraint” denotes the way we talk about certain subjects and “restriction” comprises taboo subjects like insanity, death and sexuality. Thus there are several external and internal procedures that regulate the production of discourse in Foucauldian terms, “These procedures are all concerned with classifying, distributing and ordering discourse, and their function is ultimately to distinguish between those who are authorized to speak and those who are not.” (Mills 59)

The colonial discourse theory endeavours to unmask the manner in which the colonizer conducts to satisfy his avarice. The formation of discourse from the angle of the colonized is required to make the world legible for them. They have to reorder their subjectivity in a fashion through which they can also feel proud of their existence rather than getting immersed in self-pity thrust by prejudiced outlooks. Instead of becoming “objects” of discourses, the colonized have to reconfigure social practices to occupy the subject positions whenever it is validated. Thus by way of counter-discourses they can overcome the burden of colonisation that they are carrying within themselves even after almost centuries of the termination of colonisation as a political mission. Counter-discourses are, per se, attempts to represent reality differently. For this reason, representations become relevant here too as earlier indicated. Ideology is an approved concept that leads to general perception whereas discourse is the operating force behind all power functions. Therefore it is pertinent to place discourse along with subaltern because then it will initiate prospects of amending the wrong done to the subordinated classes by exposing the viciousness of power; however utilizing the strength afforded by the loathing of that same power.

This type of discourse will aim to situate a subaltern aspect too to the shared events and experiences.

Michel Foucault appropriates Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon Surveillance to describe how power operates. He connects power to knowledge. In order to secure and maintain power, the authorities fabricate knowledge that supports its cause. Hence who controls knowledge is of prime importance. The people are kept ignorant of the identity of the powerful oppressor or the surveyor. On the one hand when surveillance offers security and order, it is also employed as a tool for repression, more so in the modern technologically oriented world. Once it is realized that power works through knowledge and censor, the counter revolutions should attempt to create one that enables them to challenge the usurper. This need not be always in a large scale; but even as trickles, that is locally, it should generate dissent enough to ensure the fall of the oppressor. Accordingly, discourse performs two functions – it configures power and also sets up its opposition simultaneously.

Richard Terdiman argues in *Discourse and Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth Century France* that "no discourse is ever a monologue" (36). The counter-discourses are marked not only by resistance but also subversion. Homi K Bhabha in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994) delves on the concept of "mimicry" referring to the mindless imitation forced upon the colonized, a "camouflage" rather than a positive effort to get better. In most cases this results in mere caricatures. This is a dangerous phenomenon for both the cultures involved. While the culture that mimics is victimized, the mimicked one's purity is at stake. The colonizer, urged by the hunger for power, fails to realize that his culture too is at stake in such encounters. Thus this mode of resistance executed by the colonized succeeds in subverting the invading ethos. Bhabha's mistrust of the binary

oppositions and a call for hybridity may be offered as a solution for this ever conflicting battle between the right and the wrong. For him, the Other derives identity not from the "differences" or with respect to the relation with the colonizer, which would be a contradictory position, defeating its goal. Terdiman's and Bhabha's models, though appear to be in conflict as one favours highlighting differences so as to reiterate existence while the other despises "differences" for aligning the subaltern identity to that of the suppressor; both admits the essential differences of the Self and the Other as something to be worked upon. In the era of so-called globalisation, one question remains bewildering – why is there a hesitance for several positive aspects of the society to get "globalized?" Why "subalternity" is (mis)treated in such a way that the position of certain others is centralized?

As a result, advocating for the subaltern cause actually indicates the necessity of an effort to permeate that demarcation. One can never learn to be independent by being dependent or at the mercy of the affluent. As M Kunhaman asserts in his article "Globalization: A Subaltern Perspective," in this era of globalisation; when more and more of subalterns are being generated, the subaltern must not only speak, but scream and get out of the "dependency syndrome." Additionally, the subaltern comprises of two types: those who were marginalized right from birth and those who were marginalized as a result of the emergence of capitalism. The degree of invasion is more pronounced for those belonging to the first category. By critically rethinking political ideologies that have been aimed at liberating mankind from oppressions in the past and their present inability to address the issues from a subaltern perspective at least in some cases, Spivak and other critics call for a remodelling of theoretical framework that problematises dominance. Thus it is not essentially a biased political approach but an attempt to restore balance to ideological perspectives. Spivak

observes caution by refraining from speaking for them via foregrounding the politics of representation and also through citing examples from history. A “statement” is not simply a sentence or an utterance for Foucault, but it can be as divergent as a map or an image that conveys information regarding something concrete and thereby “speaks” to the viewer. This significant difference in their approaches to the subaltern question lends a totality to the endeavour of reconsidering dominance. In cohesion with Foucault’s “discourse,” Spivak introduces “worlding,” “…the assumption that when the colonizers come to a world, they encounter it as uninscribed earth upon which they write their inscriptions.” (qtd. in Morton 18)

An exploration of the key theoretical terms employed in this thesis has disclosed various strategies of subjugation and their effects on those at the receiving end. Frequent use of theoretically loaded terms to situate individuals may lead to a drift from the impartial referring point to another mindless categorisation. As the title of this chapter suggests, the structures that have to be effaced warrants a neutral standpoint free from coercive intent. Only then one can have a fulfilling existence without feeling tempted to dominate. Erasing identities should not be the agenda that tops one’s list. Also, laying down structures or rules to be followed by others while remaining immune oneself, is an improper stance. Formation of new structures in the name of countering hegemony can only lead to promoting disparities. Whatever structures are built will be demolished in the end by forces competing to emerge as fierce challengers for parity. To this effect the critic Hawley adds, “One might say, first that there is the matter of justice, of granting to the last percentage of the human population that the “subaltern” represents a deserved acknowledgement as an equal”. (159)

PRATHIBHA P “ REDEFINING SUBALTERN DISCOURSE: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE OTHER IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF AMITAV GHOSH. “ THESIS. PG DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND RESEARCH CENTRE ,VIMALA COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), THRISSUR, UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT, 2019.

CHAPTER III

CONTESTING OBLIVION: RECOVERED IDENTITIES IN GHOSH'S OEUVRE

> Clearly, those dilemmas of diaspora that are engendered in the margins of history are foregrounded in Ghosh to attain preeminence in fiction…. an elaborate footnote to mammoth historical contexts. (Bose 18)

Brinda Bose, in her introduction to *Amitav Ghosh: Critical Perspectives*, considers Ghosh's preoccupation as a writer to be mainly centred on enriching fiction by aligning it to long-forgotten events and individuals that have not been allowed to penetrate the pages of written history intact. They are, in this sense, no less than footnotes to history without relating to which, no history can ever be absolute. Indeed, they enlarge the historical canvas and rationalize its effects by including imperilled accounts. These accounts are relegated to the margin, without much consideration, if at all they manage to divulge their existence. Amitav Ghosh, through uncompromising research, has always made it a point to retrieve such stories from the margins to ensure them due position in public records. This mission is evident right from the publication of his first novel, *The Circle of Reason* in 1986.

Ghosh's debut novel is in the form of an allegory of the way "reason" operates and is arrived at in modes of contemporary knowledge production. Divided into three sections – *Satwa*: Reason, *Rajas*: Passion and *Tamas*: Death – the novel deals with various themes ranging from the battle between science and what is considered as pseudo-science, problems of migrants and imperialist occupation, to the effects of globalization on developing economies. Balaram, the uncle of the protagonist Alu, is obsessed with the West and its knowledge structures. His passion for phrenology and the scientist Louis Pasteur's findings, though contrary, run parallel to each other.

While Alu believes in a traditional approach; Balaram, the village schoolmaster, is steadfast on adopting progressive methods to solve issues. This drives him to the point of cleaning the village with carbolic acid in the name of sterilization and initiating a campaign for clean underwear. He sets up "Pasteur School of Reason" to achieve these objectives. Here, Ghosh seems to be satirizing the pure/impure binaries perpetuated by the West with regard to cultures in the context of colonial invasion, "Although the novel dramatizes a range of cultural conflicts, ultimately it expresses a humanist creed, which unsettles a range of binaries, such as those between tradition and modernity, nature and technology and East and West." (Thieme 257)

Ghosh tries to achieve a balance between such dualities through Balaram's character however observing caution himself not to prioritize even Balaram's standpoint. He executes this by bringing Balaram's actions under scrutiny during many occasions in the novel. Balaram can be regarded as a hybrid between colonizer and the colonized in that he worships and inculcates the colonizer's practices even as he cleaves to those that modern science despises. Books like Vallery-Radot's biography *The Life of Pasteur* and *Practical Phrenology*, scientists like Louis Pasteur and scientists who have fallen in esteem like Combe, Spurzheim are all revered equally by him. His interests lie in varied fields like microbiology, phrenology, plant physiology and criminal anthropology. Hybridity is not confined to his character traits but also in the symbols that recur throughout the novel like weaving, *The Life of Pasteur* etc.

Apparently unconnected incidents are woven through interspersing past and present with implications in the future. After Bhudeb Roy, the politician cum educationist who runs a school, poisons Balaram's pond killing the fishes to take revenge on him for interrupting the *puja* he organized to please the Inspector of

Schools; an agitated Toru Debi, Balaram's wife, burns Balaram's books. Alu manages to salvage *The Life of Pasteur* from her and presents it to a grateful Balaram because they share a deep bond with the book as Balaram had read out a passage from it to stimulate Alu's emotions when he was a child. Balaram had later handed it over to his college friend Dantu. Alu is now on the run from the ASP Jyoti Das who is continuously on his trail through Calcutta, Kerala, Mahe, al-Ghazira and finally Algeria suspecting him to be an extremist. Roy had set up Das against Balaram and Alu resulting in a fire that kills Balaram, Toru Debi, Maya; their servant girl and her brother Rakhal, who was secretly indulging in making explosives that culminated in these deaths. Fatefully, this confirms Das's suspicions against the innocent Alu. The role of chance happenings is further explored in the novel to the extent of centralizing it as a major trope in the novel. In Algeria, the circle gets complete when Alu meets Dr Uma Verma, a microbiologist, who is actually Dantu's daughter. He finds the same book there in a far away land in Dr Verma's bookshelf and both of them discover the link that binds them through Balaram and Dantu – the thread of reason and rationality. Irrespective of time, place and distance; meaning reveals itself or becomes self evident. This may sometimes disrupt historical patterns, but it is essential to discern the hidden tapestry as Hawley notes in *Amitav Ghosh*.

Apart from the book, carbolic acid with which Balaram was too obsessed, also finds way to Algeria. The character Kulfi's dead body is purified with it before cremation as Ganga *jal* is not readily available to perform the ritual. Dr Verma acts like an accommodating believer by being ready to compromise on certain aspects while insisting on cremation as per religious beliefs. Dr Mishra, another expatriate, on the other hand seems to adapt to the new environment outwardly; lamenting Dr Verma's conventional ways, yet he is the one who inwardly refuses to move away

from the customs. This ambiguity in character as Bhabha explains in *The Location of Culture* (1994) stems out of an embarrassment of one's own culture coupled with an idolization of another one. In scientific circles, Chambers exposes it thus, "In India…'natives' were stereotyped as illogical, dreamy creatures of instinct, while Britain's scientific and technological practices were presented as proof of the superior faculty of reasoning. Western science… being objective, culturally neutral, benevolent in intention, and allowing access to 'truth'" (Chambers 40).

The dictionary defines "reason" as the power of the mind to think, understand, and form judgments logically. "Logic" appears to be the keyword here which is precisely what the natives "lack" and hence their practices are something to be frowned upon initiating scope for imperialist intervention to "redeem" their situation. Balaram devotes his life to champion the cause of reason and believes that it will find its way to truth fighting against all odds. This materializes through Alu who carries forward his legacy culminating in his encounter with Dr Verma, who hands over *The Life of Pasteur* to him. Alu, dramatically, places it on the funeral pyre with a hope to envisage its reincarnation as promised by the religion. Death is, in this sense, another beginning – of the rebirth of a soul caught up in the cycles of birth till it prepares itself to part with material comforts. The possible rebirth of the book also hints at Balaram's resurrection – that of his ideology and steadfast struggle for a share in the logic of reason, that too using the same tool of the West. The final burning of the book can also be a pointer towards the termination of the dominant modes of discourse, a reiteration of the fact that, "… all sciences are, in some degree, provisional; dependent on their society and time" (Chambers 53).

Ghosh, as Chambers substantiates, draws attention to a strange domain of science filled with preconceptions, which has evaded attention generally. Scientists

are usually admired for their contributions, but once they fail or their findings are invalidated, they are immediately relegated to an insignificant realm characterized by disregard and mental harassment. Paradoxically, science that creates avenues of authority is also the stage where ruthless discrimination takes place. Ghosh's interrogation of this phenomenon of highlighting the part played by a few scientists in the progress of science, whereas it involves the efforts of many others too who have been conveniently forgotten in all narrations, challenges the structures of knowledge dissemination. Many of these scientists have been instrumental in providing a lead to several inventions, even if they did not arrive at those conclusions themselves. Therefore, they have been erred by being labelled as failures. This brings the whole line of "failed" scientists under shelter, including the so-called pseudo-scientists because what distinguishes one from the other has not been successfully fixed thus far. Besides, many of the acclaimed scientists have agreed to their affiliation with such unrecognized theories. In this situation, giving too much attention to famous scientists could be as perilous as ignoring those who have been unsuccessful in their endeavour. Ghosh drives home the comprehension that the strategy working behind such a veneration of particular scientists is not one associated with charity but selfishness, a vehicle to reinforce the colonizer's potency. Alu, unlike his uncle, is able to adopt an unprejudiced attitude to science.

Alu's real name Nachiketa taken from the Upanishad symbolizes man's quest for the unattainable. Like the mythical character, Alu also encounters death at close quarters as he is buried alive for days when the building he was working in, The Star, collapses. As Nachiketa had to wait outside Yama's door without food and water, Alu too had to spend days in the debris deprived of sustenance. He is saved by a sewing machine that miraculously stops a concrete slab from falling on him. This reminds

one of his dead aunt, Toru Debi's Singer sewing machine and it appears as though she intervened on his behalf. The sewing machine, according to Balaram, does not recognize geographical divisions. Cloth is a commodity that is universal and quite symbolic of globalization as it traverses boundaries and makes its presence felt on a larger scale throughout the world. Unfortunately, it is monopolized by capitalists preventing access to indigenous craftsmanship. Shombhu Debnath, the master who taught Alu weaving; Toru Debi are all practitioners of this art of creating a universe on cloths. Alu masters weaving despite his atrophied thumb, underscoring the possibility of confronting impediments through willpower. Ghosh further proposes that the loom is the greatest invention of man because it has liberated mankind with its symbolic propagation of cohesive thoughts, "It has created not separate worlds but one, for it has never permitted the division of the world." (COR 59)

Like the loom, the *souq* (market-place) of al-Ghazira is another symbol for a place where different cultures merge together through the migrants from several countries. The Middle East, the hub of migrant labourers during the late twentieth century, reared a discrete culture. In the chapter titled "Becalmed," Ghosh raises the issues faced by such people in a foreign country and how they devise methods to overcome these and try to set up a home of their own amidst oppositions. The broad family there consists of Zindi, a brothel owner; Professor Samuel who is obsessed with the "Theory of Queues;" Kulfi, a widow; Karthamma, a new mother; Rakesh, an unsuccessful salesman and Alu who are the new arrivals to the world already inhabited by many others. Jyoti Das's interest in bird watching and his observations on the flocks of migrating birds to be seen in the sky replicates a similar process underway in the natural world too – that of repudiating borders. Globalization has perpetuated a culture which is neither within any national border nor outside it. As

Homi Bhabha relates, this recent development could be termed transnational – one that endorses emotional relationships and spatial proximity over identical nationality as a prerequisite for peaceful co-existence. This questioning of the relevance of borders in human lives is probed further by Ghosh in the next novel SL through the protagonist, the narrator:

> I was a child, and like all the children around me, I grew up believing in the truth of the precepts that were available to me: I believed in the reality of space; I believed that distance separates, that it is a corporeal substance; I believed in the reality of nations and borders; I believed that across the border there existed another reality. (219)

The new found families in his first novel, those that are deeper and stronger than the ones united with blood having the potential to do away with barriers emerge more forcefully in his second novel thereby ascertaining the role of familial relationships in the life of individuals. Gera describes the novelist's preoccupation by stating that for Ghosh, the nation or the public is encompassed in the metaphor of the house or the personal (116). There are two families around whom the actions take place – that of Lionel Tresawsen in London and that of Justice Datta Choudherry in Calcutta. The narrator's paternal grandmother, *Th'amma* and her younger sister Mayadebi are the daughters of the latter. The narrator, like his father, is a single child whereas Mayadebi has three sons – Jatin, IIa's father; Tridib, narrator's alter-ego and Robi. The narrator is so close to Mayadebi and her family that he adds, "I could not bring myself to believe that their worth in my eyes could be reduced to something so arbitrary and unimportant as a blood relationship." (3)

This contentious stand of the narrator explains the depth of the relationship built on friendship that their family shares with the Price family across the border, in

London. Tresawsen has two sons and a widowed daughter, Mrs Price who is the mother of May and Nick. May and Tridib's correspondence which begins in 1959, later develops into a strong bond between them but suffers a tragic end by the death of Tridib in a communal riot in 1964. The narrator goes to London almost fifteen years later on a research grant and gets involved with May, who is immersed in social work and leading an ascetic life after Tridib's premature demise. The family connection across the border is again kept alive through IIa's marriage to Nick, but that too fails miserably due to Nick's infidelity. He marries her for money whereas for IIa, even after knowing the truth, the love for him is too deep that she finds it hard to put an end to their relationship. She was initially attracted to him owing to his "cultural superiority" and as a means to escape from her own culture; which, she felt, to be too binding on her. Her cosmopolitan attitude earns her *Tha'mma's* rebuke and the latter always attempts unsuccessfully to dissuade the narrator from falling for Ila. His love remains unrequited, though, owing to her existence in a fantasy world.

Tha'mma and IIa are set in contrast to each other as their thoughts are often influenced by their different upbringing and circumstances in life. *Tha'mma* had been widowed at an early age of thirty-two and she brought up her son with her job as a teacher which she earned with her bachelor's degree in history. IIa, the single child of a diplomat grew up amidst luxury. While the grandmother is a staunch believer in nationalist principles, Ila rejects her Indian identity and wants to be accepted as part of a global culture that offers women more "freedom." Yet in practice, she forsakes her freedom for the sake of maintaining her married life intact. *Tha'mma* is satisfied with obtaining freedom from the colonisers at the cost of being culturally bound while Ila aspires for personal freedom irrespective of preserving "cultural purity." They both represent different generations of migrant women caught up in between the borders

that are intent on drawing human beings away from each other. An exception here would be Tridib, who as Gera observes, "… is cast as the paradigmatic figure of migrancy and hybridity hinting at imaginings of the self other than the traditional ones" (119).

The metaphor of weaving and migration is carried forward in Ghosh's second novel too by interspersing three generations spread in three different countries within the fabric of fiction. After the formation of Bangladesh; the narrator's family, being Hindus, had to flee to Calcutta. Dhaka, Calcutta and London are the places that feature in this story that highlights the vigour of imagination which can free the real from the invented; also it is a faculty that can let one "invent" the real. The unnamed narrator is taught to use his "imagination with precision" (SL 24) by his uncle Tridib to whom he is deeply attached. Otherwise, Tridib warns the narrator, he can never be "free of other people's inventions" (31). The narrator imbibes his advice to the extent of always making it a point to get to the root of all incidents by collecting as many evidences as possible from people's account and sources like newspaper and other such means. He also goes by his intuition powered by imagination to deduce things. He interprets history and discloses its silences effectively before reaching at conclusions regarding the truth behind events. In this manner, he proves that silence must be effectively interpreted to wheedle out its content. Incidentally, it is Tridib's murder in Dhaka and the many versions of it that he hears from his father, *Tha'mma*, Robi and finally, May that prompts him to probe the missing links and finally connect it to other conflicts that happened in India simultaneously. So, past is not merely what is contained in history textbooks but also something to be dug out from memory and by correlating occurrences that direct to reality and are authentic than those provided by the authorities, which, more often than not, are fictitious facts.

The story is literally narrated in bits and pieces, connecting events across different time periods thereby shattering the conventional structures of narration. This deliberate disruption facilitates the awareness of an atypical aspect of "known facts." In the novel, spanning from 1939 to 1979, countries and events take shape in the readers' mind through the characters' imagination and memories laid out in a random manner, making the process of recovering lost entities quite an exacting task. The two parts of the novel titled, "Going Away" and "Coming Home" drives home the main theme – the fluidity of borders and how they are chartered, as stated by Ghosh in an interview, "in order to manipulate our ways of thought: that is why they must be disregarded" (Hawley 9). "Going Away" could suggest, in a literal sense, Mayadebi's journey to London along with her family in the beginning and Ila's adoration of Nick, dismissing the narrator's feeling towards her in the end of the first part, on a metaphorical level. "Coming Home" is ironic in the sense that it begins in 1962 with the retirement of *Tha'mma* and ends with May's account, of Tridib's sacrifice of his life itself, to the narrator the day before he is to leave for India from London. She, thus, purges herself of the guilt that she had felt so far by triggering the actions that led to his death in the hands of a few fascists. *Tha'mma* had "gone home" to Dhaka to fetch her elderly uncle Jethamoshai from their ancestral home in Dhaka which is occupied by refugees. She wants to bring him "back home" to Calcutta, but her attempt is thrashed by an infuriated mob that attacks the uncle and his rickshaw driver, Khalil. May, who instinctively gets out of the car to rescue them, is followed by Tridib. The mob kills Jethamoshai, Khalil and Tridib whereas her apparently foreign look leaves her unharmed. *Tha'mma* and her family members are considered strangers to be viewed with suspicion in their own native place while May, who lives miles away, is dismissed as harmless.

Tridib's significance in the novel cannot be undermined even after his death. Through such characters and their experiences, the readers are made to ponder on the actual cause behind slaughters. Under Tridib's mentoring, the narrator has learned to question facts before accepting them as true. Once he guesses that the riots of 1964 are interconnected, he attempts to gather evidence by hunting through the newspapers of that time in a library in New Delhi. This leads him to major revelations about the immobility of governments in the face of misfortunes caused to the public because only then the authority can be maintained undaunted. Justifying such acts in the name of nationalism or religion will perpetuate such inhuman deeds in the future too, posing threat to the same national integrity that it so earnestly tries to "protect." The rising tension between India and its neighbouring countries after colonial rule and the culmination of it in the form of riots, that took place simultaneously in Srinagar, Calcutta and Dhaka, gets centralized in an effort to prevent it from getting erased out of memory. The disappearance of the sacred relic Mu-i-Mubarak, Prophet Mohammed's hair, from Hazratbal mosque in Srinagar sets off a series of demonstrations and mindless destruction of government properties by anti-social elements. This hostility continues even after the relic is recovered by the authorities. The narrator realizes that, as Robi believes, freedom is after all a mirage, which moves away as one tries to hold it in one's grasp.

The title too points towards this abstract quality of often celebrated binaries whether it is the dividing lines between nations, literary genres or imagination and memory. The only concrete reality is the experiences that human beings accumulate during their lifetime and the associations they cherish irrespective of the factors that strive to separate them. This is the "final redemptive mystery" (252) that the narrator fathoms with the help of May in the end. The title also have allusions to Joseph

Conrad's novella, *The Shadow Line* (1917) and echoes, as Dixon points out, Benedict Anderson's focus in his influential book, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (1983) that nationalist feelings are constructed to sustain politics and to divide people rather than uniting them contrary to general claims. The novel reverses the conventional way of highlighting the shortcomings of the place where the plot is set, by tracing similar occurrences in other countries too. It is not just the East that is characterized by bloodshed and worthless struggles, but the other part of the world is also involved in violence. By recounting the Second World War experiences of Mrs Price's brothers, Alan and Dan, which ultimately led to their deaths; Ghosh situates a parallel between the East and the West. The novel begins with the narrator referring to a happening in the year 1939 when Britain declared war on Germany. Dixon remarks about the unique beginning of the novel thus:

> Unlike the usual colonial novel, in which Westerners travel to India to observe an ancient and self-contained culture, *The Shadow Lines* begins with an Indian passage to England: the natives are the travellers. The central fact of travel in this Indian family's experience immediately demands that we modify our expectations about Indian culture and the way it is depicted in English novels about the Raj. (18)

Ghosh's *In an Antique Land* takes a step further and begins in another country and another epoch with the author on an errand to trace the whereabouts of "The slave of MS H.6," one who caught Ghosh's attention while he was doing his PhD research at Oxford University. In 1978, he happens to come across the mention of the slave in two letters that appeared in a book of translations in Oxford library. At first in 1139, a merchant Khalaf ibn Ishaq of Aden writes a business letter to a fellow merchant, Abraham Ben Yiju of Mangalore, at the end of which he conveys his greetings to the

latter's slave. The slave's name is mentioned and the translator, in his footnote, describes him as, "slave and business agent, a *respected member* [emphasis added] of his household" (7). Again in a correspondence between them in 1148, the same reference repeats pointing towards the unmistakable presence of the slave and adding to his significance as an individual with a name and identity of his own. This identity is established in historical records for the first time in 1942 through an article titled "New Sources for the History of Middle Eastern Jews" by a scholar E Strauss in a Hebrew journal. These transcribed letters appeared in that article along with other medieval documents and has been doubly stamped with distinctiveness by allocating the catalogue number MS H.6. Ben Yiju returned to Egypt during his last years and his documents were preserved in a chamber of the synagogue in Cairo known as the Geniza.

Ghosh learns Arabic and travels to Egypt to collect first hand information about the slave that might provide him access to the hitherto unknown dominions of history. As Roma Chatterji notes about the novel, "The book opens in the classic ethnographic style with the anthropologist's entry into the field" (92). In contrast to the customary fashion by which the natives are made to learn the foreign language, here Ghosh initiates an adaptable trend by gaining knowledge of the local culture through their own tools like the language Arabic. This apart from empowering him and making him less gullible to deceit also serves to bring him close to indigenous ethos. This enables him to examine not just the customs and practices of the region under study but also provides him insights into his own society. Thus through this neutral analysis that is analytical and reproachful of the subject at the same time self directed, Ghosh escapes censure for biased representation of any kind. As Basu suggests, the object of study is made visible "through an allegedly scientific method

of inquiry" (207).This "method" often comes under scrutiny due to Ghosh's disapproval of the existence of tangible differences between literary genres.

Though the story is set for a major part in Egypt, India and its cultural diversity always looms large in the background through the narrator and his conversations with others about his homeland and its peculiarities. Ghosh stays for rent in the house of Abu-'Ali, an over-bearing middle-aged person who is dreaded by the villagers of Lataifa. He runs a shop where essential commodities are sold at government subsidized rates, the only such shop in the village. Incurring his wrath meant denial of goods, which would leave people in too much trouble as they will then have to go to the neighbouring village. A wealthy obese man with college education, he enjoys the favour of many influential people to carry on, unquestioned, with his shop permit. Shaikh Musa, another elder in the village to whom Ghosh is more close to, treats him with more warmth and acts like a guide to him in that unfamiliar locale. Ghosh also gets acquainted with his two sons Ahmed and Hasan; Ahmed's wife and sister; his step mother Sakkina, who is the great grand niece of Abu –'Ali. Later when Hasan, who is in the army, dies of severe headache in the camp, unfortunately Ghosh could not participate in his funeral as he left for Cairo owing to the observance of Ramadan. Upon his return, he pays visit to their house and takes part in the mourning almost like a member of the family. The relationships built on friendship and mutual trust always proves to be a consolation at times of distress rather than those united by blood as the former is born out of one's choice, free of obligations and hence would be less pretentious. As established by Ghosh in his earlier novels too, travel proves to be a crucial factor in building such intense associations surpassing corporeal limits.

Such affiliations can be either rewarding as the above ones or demanding like many others that he develops afterwards. Abu-'Ali's cousin's son Jabir, a teenager, often engages in conversation with him and one day introduces him to his uncle, Ustaz Mustafa who has a degree in law from the University of Alexandria and so fit to be referred to as Ustaz meaning "Teacher." He is keen on converting Ghosh to Islam but had to give up that idea reluctantly when he learnt from Ghosh that his father might not approve of it and disobeying one's father is unthinkable for Ustaz Mustafa, being himself a father. When Ghosh moves to Nashawy, the neighbouring village, he meets new people like the healer Imam Ibrahim, the village school teacher and orator Ustaz Sabry, his close friends Nabeel and Ismail who went to Iraq to make money and improve their family conditions, Khamees, the member of the Jammal community etc. Imam is known for his healing powers by using traditional remedies and urged by Shaikh Musa, Ghosh impatiently waits for a chance to converse with him. Finally, when such an opportunity presents before him through Yasir, Imam's son, he gets disappointed to know that the Imam has developed an aversion to conventional ways. Influenced by the Occident's disapproval of the Orient's age-old practices; in an effort to rise up to the Western standards in which he sees the future, the Imam now endorses injections instead of herbs, "The irony was that he, who was no more than a walking fossil, a relic of the past, in the eyes of Nabeel and his generation, was actually on fire with a vision of the future." (IAL 156)

The West becomes the reference point to civilization for both the Imam and Ghosh when they engage in a heated debate regarding their respective cultural superiority. The Imam questions Ghosh about the Hindu practice of worshipping cows and cremating the dead. In the absence of an Arabic word that best describes the religious ritual, often people refer to it as "burning," which could be interpreted as an

act of disrespect to the dead. The scattering of the ashes in a river is equated on many occasions, by the villagers, to wiping out any trace of even their memory from the world that they occupied till then. When confronted thus, the young Ghosh points out to the existence of electric furnaces in Europe too, which leads both himself and the Imam to brag about the modern science and technology that each of their country possesses, at par with the West, to unleash violence. Ghosh repents these immature exchanges as he grasps the inherent paradox that, inadvertently, they were both supporting groundless carnage and were being victims of imposed emotions that favoured differences rather than factors that bind humanity. Ghosh laments, "I felt myself a conspirator in the betrayal of the history that had led me to Nashawy; a witness to the extermination of a world of accommodations that I had believed to be still alive, and, in some tiny measure, still retrievable." (194)

Ghosh is alienated with a barrage of questions repeatedly regarding his Holy Book and Prophet; about compulsory military service; the presence of crops, fields, rain and canals; and the absence of circumcision rites for many, especially women, in India. Again, language here plays tactfully as a tool of culture to emphasize differences because for them, it is a matter of achieving "purity." Hence the alien culture becomes impure and therefore something to be despised. Through these contradictions, Ghosh reiterates the need to focus on inter-human relationship rather than inter-cultural ones and that is precisely what brings him back to Cairo or *Masr*, the term used interchangeably for Egypt and Cairo, because as Shaikh Musa believes, she is "the mother of the world" (60). Eight years later when he returns to Egypt on a visit in1988, he is awed by the changes to the people and the surroundings in the course of time. With globalization, people have discovered the prospects of betterment by working in foreign countries like Iraq and Kuwait instead of satisfying

the endless criteria and waiting for securing a permanent job in the homeland. Nabeel, Ismail and Mabrouk have left the country while Jabir is anxiously trying to move out of the country to fulfil the dream of a comfortable and luxurious life. In 1990, when Ghosh visits them again after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, he hears of Nabeel's and Mabrouk's missing and ends the novel thus, "Nabeel had vanished into the anonymity of History." (296)

Fortunately, though, Ghosh could salvage the slave from the remnants of history and this journey takes him through many parts of the world which are distant, so to speak, but share features that vouch for a vast number of similarities between them than differences. When Zaghloul seemingly mocks him about the distance that separates Egypt from India, he explains:

> … thinking of all the reasons why it would not be possible to travel from Egypt to India on a donkey, something caught fire in my imagination and I began to talk… of visas and quarantines, of the ribbon of war that stretched from Iraq to Afghanistan, of the heat of the Dasht-e-Kabir and the height of the Hindu Kush, of the foraging of snow leopards and the hairiness of yaks. No one listened to me more intently than Zaghloul, and for months afterwards, whenever he introduced me to anyone, he would tell them, with a dazzled, wondering lilt in his voice, of how far away my country was… and of the terrible fate that would befall one if one were to set out for it on a donkey. (140)

It is clear from Ghosh's account of it that he was not being mocked at all, but there were genuinely people who experience amazement at the thought of the "unknown" world existing outside their own. Ghosh too is curious like them which not only makes him an accomplished writer, but also takes him more close to these people

through friendship, that he yearns for always and compels him to return to their midst whenever time permits or his vocation demands. Their status as fellaheen or unlettered peasants never discourages him from developing camaraderie with them. This outlook of the author will be analyzed in detail in the following chapter which deals with the reconfiguring of such identities neglected on the basis of Western standards of advancement.

The serendipitous discovery of the slave prompts Ghosh to ruminate on the role of coincidence in scientific enquiry, which science acknowledges, yet when it comes to be treated as more pronounced in the field of humanities and arts; it becomes a thing to be scorned and to be termed invalid. When a writer attempts to make connections based on history and memories or chance remarks, it is treated as fiction. An anthropologist like Ghosh cannot treat them as trivial, so he embarks on a journey to Egypt for research in 1980-81, again in 1988-89 and finally in 1990. He traces the route of the merchant Ben Yiju and his slave from Fustat, Cairo in 1152 to Aden and Mangalore in India. The slave's name written as B-M-H or B-M-A in the manuscripts is interpreted in many ways as Bama, Brahma and at last as Bomma or Bamma, a name quite common in Mangalore. He is also given the title "Shaikh," one that connects him to Egypt too. In those days slavery could also mean apprenticeship pointing to the indispensable part performed by Bomma in Yiju's trade matters. Ghosh discerns from his study of the documents related to the merchant, preserved in the Synagogue, that many of them have been transported to Cambridge University library and to many other private collections in US and Europe. He leaves for America to tie the loose ends regarding Bomma and to surpass the dominant mission to "archive" the Orient.

Bomma, thus, finds his way to Egypt and finally to a library in Philadelphia where in an attempt to subdue him, as Ghosh ironically notes, he has actually been accorded a privileged position in the library, "… protected by the awful might of the American Police, lies entombed the last testament to the life of Bomma, the toddy-loving fisherman from Tulunad" (292). The trade customs of the Middle Ages especially that of the spices get narrated through this novel, where the author in the garb of an anthropologist engaged in meticulous research like a scientist, discovers the subtle ways through which subordination of cultures takes place. He successfully follows the trail left behind by individuals to not only recover them from anonymity but also to prove through historical evidence that distance and cultural differences melt away with the passion to embrace humanity. Apart from the Prologue and the Epilogue, there are four chapters titled "Lataifa," "Nashawy," "Mangalore" and "Going Back," the last one reminding of SL where the journey is to Britain, hence termed "Going Away" whereas here the author feels "back" at home in his return visit to Egypt to meet those who are close to him.

It is not only the motif of travel that continues from his previous works, but also those of migration through Nabeel and others and weaving through the character Zaghloul. The migrants, here too, have to face crisis as a result of Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the following Gulf War in 1991. The immense and meticulous research, beating those conducted in laboratories, is obvious from the other works that have emanated from this research apart from this novel. *The Imam and the Indian*: *Prose Pieces* (2002) is a product of his encounter with Imam Ibrahim of Nasahwy which left an ache in his heart thinking of the hollowness in one's mind despite education. The Imam's craze for modern science makes one draw a parallel between him and Balaram. Ghosh's cook and caretaker in Nashawy, Ann Taha, a self

proclaimed expert in eliminating spells finds a counterpart in his next novel, *The Calcutta Chromosome*. The numerous characters in this story, despite following the religion of silence, manage to communicate to the world in mysterious ways. The legitimacy of these "voices" does not come under scrutiny as it precisely issues from the so-called marginalized communities. As Ghosh mentions in one of his interviews, this would have been more astute in the hands of a "subaltern scientist" (Hawley 158). Thus it paves way for the relevance of such characters like Laakhan and Mangala who reincarnate, to put it bluntly, as the eastern response to discourses of knowledge.

The novel spans around various time periods and it is through the character Murugan that these periods are linked. He considers himself an expert on Ronald Ross, the Nobel Prize winner for his contributions in medicine towards finding a cure for the deadly disease malaria. He was a man interested in researching on the history of malaria, but from the moment where the discoverer and the discovered amalgamate into one. In this sense he actually considers Ross's inquiry to be "lead" by external intervention, which he calls the "Other Mind" (CC 32). The scientific community could not digest this subversion of "knowledge," which finally led to his ostracism from them. Ghosh nonetheless gives voice to Murugan's version through this novel, which emerges as an interesting tale of rebuilding the "history from below" as Subaltern historians would have ventured upon.

According to Murugan, Ross began his malarial research by collecting blood samples, but he was hard put to find donors. It is at this juncture that one Abdul Kadir shows up before him with a case of malaria. The strange fact is that Ross never seems to be curious over his arrival at a time when everyone was backing away from him, terming it to be witchcraft. Similarly when he wants someone to test his drink created out of dead mosquitoes, Lutchman offers himself for experiment. All these incidents

vouch for some person/persons leading Ross into things that they want to prove. For this purpose, Ghosh resorts to native characters like Lutchman, who were till now visualized only as the recipients of knowledge rather than the purveyors. While recounting his hunches to Antar, Murugan repeatedly speaks of them as "facts" behind Ross's research.

Lutchman from then on becomes Ross's assistant and thus the research transforms itself without the scientist's knowledge, because he is no more the one "doing" the experiment, but he "is" the experiment himself. When Murugan comes to Calcutta to further his research on Ross, he is followed everywhere by a gap-toothed boy in printed T-shirt, who figures in all the three time-periods of the novel, engrossing the reader's *raison d'êtres* as Murugan remarks to Antar, "he was all over the map, changing names, switching identities. …the point-man for whoever was the real brain behind the scheme" (76). Coming back to Ross's experiment, Murugan further adds that it is at this crucial point of research that J W D Grigson, the linguist comes to stay with Ross. He notices certain discrepancies in Lutchman's pronunciation betraying his nativity. Besides the name is also quite common with slight variations like Laakkhan, Lokhkhon, and Lakshman depending upon the place one is from. Ghosh provides an aura of mystery to this character by supplying him with multiple identities yet his individuality is established by a little detail about his left hand, the missing thumb and the curled index finger.

Murugan in a sense becomes Ghosh's mouthpiece in voicing his concerns for regional sensibilities. The subalterns have always been criticized harshly for their cultural beliefs and rituals, often operating in contrast to dominant ideology especially that of science, which are derogatorily considered as counter-science. Murugan describes the working of this branch in minute detail almost as to authenticate it.

Their functions depend on the basis of secrecy, not just about what they do, like science, but also in the final outcome unlike science. The peculiarity about counter-science is that it impugns any claim to knowledge thus dislodging all criticisms levelled against it. When faced with a sense of senselessness, Murugan clarifies:

> Not making sense is what it's about – *conventional sense* [emphasis added] that is. …knowledge is self-contradictory; …to know something is to change it, therefore in knowing something, you've already changed what you think you know so you don't really know it at all: you only know its history. …knowledge couldn't begin without acknowledging the impossibility of knowledge. (91)

Thus we have Ross's scientific research on malaria on one side and the rather unscientific one on the other. This team is in a sense "using/leading" Ross's work to complement theirs, a "conventional scientist" who can hasten their project with the technological support at his disposal. At the same time the challenge is that they have to carry this out without his knowledge, "They've got to make it look like he's found out for himself" (92). Ghosh here problematizes the predicament of the marginal community, yet in a way as to turn their disadvantage to their advantage. While they remain unaccounted for, their majority status and anonymity lend them strength whereas the hegemonic class is always in complete view owing to their clamour to exert power over the subalterns.

Murugan's recounting of their project leaves Antar wondering as to the objective behind all this effort. To which Murugan replies that they were behind evolving "a technology for interpersonal transference" (93). This technology is something that allows people to switch themselves over, in a way transforming the self into a new and improved version; at the same time offering all the comforts of

secrecy. This transformation is achieved through transmission of chromosomes from one body to another, a sort of migration in search of "a matching symptomology" (95). Ghosh here questions the impossibility of such far-away concepts like incarnation, given the modern technological bombardment that science affords, which form a crucial part of Indian ethos especially that of many regional cultures, though in varying forms. For Murugan such a possibility exists and that too nowhere else than in Calcutta, which formed the setting for Ross's research. So he is engrossed in a search for the "Calcutta chromosome."

The people involved in this chain communicate with and remind each other of their complex identity through clues like letters that they stumble upon accidently or through messages conveyed to them secretly via newspaper columns or stories. The chain starts with a woman named Mangala in her late thirties, who was found from a railway station by Dr Cunningham, a scientist in charge of a laboratory in Calcutta at around 1894. She goes on to become the "demi-urge …. the one behind the whole experiment" (193). Along with her assistant, a young man, she is heading a project which begins with an elaborate ceremony, what seems like curing syphilitic patients using malaria inflicted blood of dying pigeons, "a bird version of malaria" (170). The pigeons in a sense perform the function of a test-tube. Though they start their journey in 1894, it stretches up to 1995, where we find them as altogether different characters; Mangala as Mrs. Aratounian, the assistant as the gap-toothed boy, and Laakhan as Romen Haldar. After many years they are still on the lookout for "new bodies," continuing with their strange experiments in each period guided by their own god, a small clay figure consisting of a tiny pigeon on the one side and a microscope on the other.

Tara, Antar, Maria, Lucky, Murugan, Urmila, Sonali are a few names that emerge out of their project, though the list never seems to end. They function like the torch-bearers heading to the future. In their journey, they annihilate anyone who comes in their way except for the chosen ones. Even those who only have a temporary role to play: to link lost connections like D D Cunningham and Phulboni, the writer, are cast out of way on realizing their purpose. As the spiritualist leader in the novel, Mme Salminen remarks, they are left to be claimed by "Silence" (181), the female deity of the Valentinian Cosmology representing truth: the male being the Abyss, who represents mind. Murugan aptly points out to Urmila, "Fact is we're dealing with a crowd for whom silence is a religion" (185). They like to keep many things to themselves, only gradually disclosing the ones that they wish to convey, saving many things for the future. The underlying suggestion is that their century-long journey may not end.

Antar's high-tech system Ava through which he had been collecting information about Murugan also becomes their tool in conveying their messages sooner and much efficiently. At last Antar traces Murugan in the "Department of Alternative Inner States" (204), to put simply, an asylum. After tying all the loose threads together, Murugan was left behind; but foreseeing such a plight and recognizing Urmila to be Mangala's chosen one, he makes her promise beforehand that he will be taken care of in due course of time. The real reason behind Murugan's interest in their research is disclosed to the readers when he informs Urmila that he had been a syphilitic patient once. Now that Antar finds him, his period of waiting has come to an end and also it completes a full circle of their project – the search begins and ends with Antar. Thus while he thought himself to be in the process of unveiling

the circumstances behind Murugan's disappearance, the truth was actually finding its way to him so as to take hold of him.

The experiment although began in a certain vein, gradually changed its course owing to unforeseen reasons. This manifested itself in "transpositions" (212) in the patients with regard to some personality traits that got transferred unintentionally from the malaria donor to the patient. This serendipitous discovery prompted them to redirect their research by focusing on this aspect, how this non-standard transformation could authenticate their own unscientific research. This is a transmission of chromosomes from generation to generation through recombination of particular cells existing in the non-regenerating tissue of the brain. The process itself sounds so unconventional that only a person likes Mangala, who is well out of the scientific world can take it for what it is. Ghosh here pointedly remarks through Murugan, "Biologists are under so much pressure to bring their findings into line with politics" (213).

In this sense the dominant discourse not only sidelines the narratives of the marginalized, but also of the so-called standard scientific community if their findings fail to substantiate the power politics of the colonizer – the political colonizer as well as the cultural colonizer. The absurdity of such an act is revealed when one considers the role of narratives. Larsson, in his article, quotes Umberto Eco to delineate the purpose of narratives, the "consoling function of narrative" is "to find a shape, a form, in the turmoil of human experience." Necessarily this experience being unique to each individual, one is left clueless as to the claims towards "authenticating" narratives. Similarly with regard to the notion of "agency," instead of arguing on the role of the narrator or the author, here it evokes a sense of identity that a work grants to its subjects.

There are two instances in the novel itself where Ghosh overrides the discursive regimes that tend to monopolize the "Other." The principal tool of monopoly is of course the media, but it comes to be chided by Mrs Aratounian when she says, "I get more news from the sweeper-woman that I do from this thing [television]" (107). A person who is generally taken to be in the bottom of the ladder is "recognized" as the source of news. Thus in the national context, the regional "occupies" the marginal status. The Subaltern historiographers' estimation would be noteworthy here:

> By 1983, scholars were writing two kinds of national history: one, a people's history filled with native culture and popular insurgency; the other, an official history filled with elites and political parties. Nations and states were separating like oil and water. So were culture and political economy. A new kind of nationality was coalescing in a separate domain of popular experience, which was becoming increasingly isolated from state institutions and national elites. (Ludden 5)

In a global context, though, the national and regional binaries are dissolved for the global economy to emerge as the vocaliser. This inherent contrast is vividly brought about by Ghosh through the character of Mrs Aratounian when she gives up on her national identity to vouch for the global one represented by the BBC. Belittling her own media she tells Murugan, "would you ever hear rubbish like that on BBC?" (109) but amends are made for this, as Murugan points elsewhere to the idiosyncrasies of the British army officers who might mistake the parasite causing malarial infection, Plasmodium, to be Julius Caesar's middle name.

The knowledge propounded by the colonized "subjects" is always viewed with scepticism. Ghosh boldly projects this subaltern challenge towards accepted narratives

as being equally justifiable in their own contexts. Khair unmistakably clarifies it for us:

> In colonial and even certain neo-imperial discourses, it [human sacrifice] stands as the example par excellence of the other as mindless, herd-like, barbarous and irrational. In *The Calcutta Chromosome*, significantly, the 'human sacrifice' is taken over and re-inscribed within the subaltern's agency and the subaltern's (suggested) discourses. From that perspective, it becomes a form of discovery, of furthering life and of planned, purposive activity. It becomes in a way the exact opposite of what 'barbaric' and 'irrational' stand for – a planned means of personal improvement and collective wellbeing" (149-50)

It is not just in the discipline of science, where imagination is indirectly ruled out, that this belittling prospers but also in disciplines where imagination rules – like arts. Art forms are invariably considered to be an integral part of culture, determining its relevance and reach in a universal scenario. Revival of folk elements and indigenous societies is in vogue today so much so that they are reduced, at times, to mere re-representations of past "glory" as afforded by the colonial regime. Thus while proposing to combat the hegemonic forces; one gets entrapped further in its all encompassing grasp. Ghosh, in his travelogue, "Dancing in Cambodia," chronicles the ceremonious victory of the classical dance form of Cambodia in securing for its homeland an indomitable spirit when faced with total annihilation. Dance and music have always been our favourite pastimes, but in this context, they too become an efficient tool to silence the counter discourses. This prose piece is unique in the way the author conjoins political aspirations to artistic roots. Khmer Rouge, the autocratic regime that threatens the Cambodian psyche, has its founding stone in the palace of

King Sisowath, the last king of Cambodia before it was taken over by Pol Pot. "…there was no money and very little food – 'I could not believe that in a situation like that people would be thinking of music and dance.' But still they came pouring in, and the theatre was filled far beyond its capacity" (DICO 45). The above quoted lines gives a vivid picture of the way the native population reacts to the first performance of the Cambodian classical dance at the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh in 1988 after the dictatorship of Pol Pot regime and the subsequent Vietnamese invasion. Just like the court dancers popularly known as *devadasis* in Indian tradition, the Cambodian royal palace is also an abode for hundreds of dancers who come there as children and get trained in their native dance form. Ghosh begins his narrative with the description of the historical visit of the sixty-six year old Cambodian ruler, King Sisowath, the princes, officials and the dancers to France in 1906. This incident is significant when juxtaposed with the fact that Cambodia was then a French colony.

The visit coincides with an Exhibition being held in France of its colonial possessions. For the colonizers, the colonies have always held a specific charm about them albeit an "uncouth" one. They always indulge in spurious descriptions of the colony's cultural artefacts, people, their behaviour and dress; and weave piquant stories around these figures to satisfy their snooping appetite. This privileging of one culture over the other has been done many times in the past. The king and his troupe become "objects" of entertainment for the French, to be viewed and commented upon as is evident in the way the dancers are described:

> With their hard and close-cropped hair, their figures like those of striplings, their thin, muscular legs like those of young boys, their arms and hands like those of little girls, they seem to belong to no definite sex. They have

> something of the child about them, something of the young warrior of antiquity and something of the woman. (3)

In an attempt to fix the colonial "subjects" in certain racial categories, the domineering forces resort to abominable descriptions which deprive the victims of their valid identity and often lead to misrepresentations.

Ghosh's purpose behind digging out this particular chapter in Cambodian history is not to lay bare the abuse of one culture in the hands of another but, more critically, to trace its connection to political upheavals. It is a matter of pertinence that the culture in danger of suppression does not comprehend its tragic position; also the seeds to obliterate it are triggered right from inside the group itself. Thus the fate of that culture gets sealed by an invading society. "Revolutions and coups d'état always start in the courtyards of the palace. It's the people within who realize that the King is ordinary, while everyone else takes him for a god". (21)

King Sisowath's reflections, after the French visit, that he communicates to his citizens are an example for this. He exhorts the people directly to imitate the French model of development, "Emulation is the only means of turning resolutely to the path of progress" (36). Ghosh supports the King by clarifying that he allows no cultural or political appropriations but only technological and economic advancement. But elsewhere in the tale while describing the attempts at demining for the resurrection of Cambodia from shatters, Ghosh depicts the contemptuous attitude of the Bangladeshi sergeant towards the locals and their innocent reaction to him:

> He waved good-naturedly at the Cambodians and they waved back, bobbing their heads, smiling and bowing. Both sides were working hard at their jobs, the expert and the amateur, the feckless and the responsible: *the doughty*

> *rescuer and the hapless rescued were both taking their roles seriously*. (emphasis added) (25)

Towards the end of the essay this circle of mimicry gets complete with the introduction of a dancer cum choreographer, Proeung Chhieng, who specializes in the role of the god Hanuman, an important character of the Khmer dance. Describing about his survival tactics at the labour camps, he acknowledges how art saved his life, "expertise in clowning and mime helped him persuade the interrogators… that he was an illiterate lunatic" (44). It is interesting to note that "mimicry" then ceases to be a negative concept, instead turns out to be an effective tool in the hands of the "all-knowing subaltern," who refuses to be "located" in culture but rebounds through culture. Thus subalternity might be an assumption after all, to be shed after the process of reinvention when they "rediscover the exhilaration of speech". (13)

Written as a travelogue, the essay reconnects several historical facts to long forgotten "subaltern" figures. CheaSamy, for instance, Pol Pot's sister-in-law and also a famous dancer in the palace is interviewed by Ghosh in 1993 with the help of an interpreter Molyka, who had suffered a lot under the authoritarian regime. Here one gets to know how power works through impossible channels:

> Cambodia's was not a civil war… it was a war on history itself, an experiment in the reinvention of society. No regime in history had ever before made so systematic and sustained an attack on the middle class. Yet, if the experiment was proof of anything at all, it was ultimately of the *indestructibility of the middle class*, of its extraordinary tenacity and resilience; its *capacity to preserve its forms of knowledge and expression through the most extreme kinds of adversity* (emphasis added). (9)

The regime that seized power in 1975 is noted for its extreme "ideological purity," one that refuses to consider even family members. They are left to die in this outrageous onslaught; many get separated from their relations and just disappear from records. Nobody knew what was happening around them. The regime, the Khmer Rouge, sustained power through subtle "mechanics of terror to deprive the population of knowledge" (12) and for them "terror is an emanation of virtue" (44). To evoke intense terror in almost all circumstances, the first to be hit are the institutions of Justice and Education.

It is the Vietnamese invasion in 1979 that frees Cambodia from the atrocities of power politics. But having tasted the bitterness of war, the people are not ready to trust any outside agency. So the militants still approach others with suspicion and contempt. As the author rightly remarks, "Paradoxically, at precisely the moment when the world had ordained peace and democracy for Cambodia, uncertainty had reached its peak within the country" (9). Khmer Rouge is now reduced to a mere "racist nationalism" (22). Invariably this is what has happened to all the revolutions in the past.

The subsequent reaction of the population throws light on the part one's culture plays in reinstating the identity that is so crucial for existence. People "slowly began to shed their assumed personae." The foreign relief worker Eva Mysliwiec recalls "the volcanic outbursts of speech that erupted everywhere at unexpected moments" (13). To rebuild the country out of its debris, two missions were taken upon: first, to ensure adequate food and the second, to hunt for the artists to bring the populace back to normalcy through performances. That is how they began to "resurrect the art" (16). The dance festival in 1988 elicits a warm response from the natives in spite of harsh situations as is proved by the quote cited earlier. From the

ravages of the successive invasions, they stage a performance using the available resources. This "compromising" mentality with regard to art is often frowned upon, labelling it to be impure and an aftermath of globalization. But seen from a different perspective, it is the victory of art in coping with challenges that is fore grounded here:

> 'We thought everything was lost, that we would never hear our music again, never see our dance.' They could not stop crying; people wept through the entire length of the performance. It was a kind of rebirth: a moment when the grief of survival became indistinguishable from the joy of living. (45)

When an attempt at social subjugation through condemnation of culture by censuring arts, remains unsuccessful, the next step is to use political power to vanquish people, groups or certain places. In ALB Ghosh reviews the political climate in Burma and the techniques applied, both directly and indirectly, to sustain denial of rights. The British invasion followed by that of Japan leaves the once rich country in shatters. The assassination of General Aung San on 19 July 1947 seals the glorious future of the country. The civil war that broke out afterwards turns it into a living hell. Amidst the violent atmosphere, what keeps the Burmese hopeful is the possibility of an eventual liberty as dreamt by leaders like General Aung San, who has now become a symbol of Burma's hope. Certain symbols are manipulated by the authority to exert *and* maintain power. As Morelos remarks, "Symbols embody values, which can be positive or negative- empowering or disempowering….they can influence our stereotypes or potentialities, our decision making faculties, towards growth or decay." (18)

Ironically, the General ends up just as a symbol in the power game, to be flaunted on bank notes and hoardings. The symbol, once manipulated, stands for

opposing ideas. At the same time its influence never ceases to be, making it all the more vulnerable at the hands of power mongers. The mob psychology is then determined by these ravished epitomes of past splendour. These images are not permanent, but preparing to lash back at the creators when time comes. This reversal of the symbolic determinants renders them extremely powerful. In this case, the General's daughter Aung San Suu Kyi emerges as the reviver of the archetype. When the Burmese starts fighting against the military rule that started after the General's murder, Suu Kyi becomes their leading voice of dissent. Now the General becomes their symbol of resistance. But contrary to their expectations, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), consisting of a group of military officers, takes control. Instead of restoring peace and order, the Council disregards law and democracy. The National League for Democracy under Suu Kyi is denied power after emerging victorious in the election. This results in her house arrest on 20 July 1989 which ends only on 11 July 1995. She is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in the interim for being "the living symbol of Burma's predicament" (DICO 67). Ghosh wonders how, after so much national and international support on her side, SLORC could keep her at bay. The key to this, he says, lay in the surveillance techniques employed by the regime.

The censoring body of SLORC, Press Scrutiny Board, functions as its surveillance tool in controlling not just explicit threats but also the implicit ones as symbols. Ghosh mentions their unease around two pictures in magazine covers – a penguin on an ice floe and a young woman seated among fallen flowers – both of which are taken to be representing Suu Kyi. The weekend meetings that she holds at her gate-side are monitored by "intelligence men holding video cameras" (69). A

fighting peacock is the symbol of her party. She is a model for people who view individual opposition with suspicion. As Ghosh remarks:

> In the postmodern world, politics is everywhere a matter of symbols, and the truth is that Suu Kyi is her own greatest political asset. It is only because Burma's 1988 democracy movement had a symbol, personified in Suu Kyi, that the world remembers it and continues to exert pressure on the current regime…. Under house arrest, Suu Kyi was a living reproach to the regime, and a bar to many foreign investors. By releasing her, the junta achieved a minor propaganda coup. (72)

Burma's history would not be complete without taking into account various multi-ethnic groups that are fighting for sovereignty. An encounter with the various leaders of one such guerilla regiment, Karenni, leaves Ghosh questioning the efficacy of the system of democracy itself in Burma. These insurgents have been fighting for so many generations that now the only alternative they are left with is to "join the underworld" (90). Ghosh ends the essay on a dubious note, Suu Kyi's own increasingly politicized ideals and diplomatic dealings with the authorities as well as the rebelling minorities point towards an inevitable change in her strategies in future. The constitution bans Suu Kyi, married to a foreigner, from becoming the head of the state. She has declared herself to be above the president. This has attracted a lot of criticism too as many fear of her getting transformed into a dictator. Also, NLD is blamed for denying the Rohingya minority, consisting of impoverished Muslims, voting rights during the election leading to much violence. These issues which have progressed further after the publication of this work will be evaluated in the next chapter. Her foreign investment policies are also viewed suspiciously by many as they

are afraid of the international companies that might rob the country of its resources. Criticism is an integral part of politics.

Edward Said proposes a shift from what he calls “The Politics of Blame” to “The Politics of Secular Interpretation” (Viswanathan 128). Politics need not be always “purely adversarial or oppositional one” (129). Since political stability relies on securing identity, which is in turn very much rooted in religion, politics can never divorce itself from the problem of the minorities. To quote Said, “.…when you assert an identity, one identity is always going to infringe on others that also exist in the same or contiguous spaces” (130). When one talks of separate national identities, one should bear in mind the fact that nations cannot be geographically or homogeneously defined. One thing to be remembered in this context is that Suu Kyi is a person who has suffered greatly in her personal life for the sake of her ideals and the people of her country. Even through the long years of house arrest, she has clung on to the virtues of non violent resistance. Taking all these factors into account, one could conclude that it is not really a country or a powerful section of a society that threatens its very own existence but the concept of nationalism itself that tries to forge an improbable identity for the people as a whole.

A fictional representation of events beginning from the end of the golden days of Burma through British and Japanese occupations; the millions of lives affected by it, be it the king or a baby, find expression in Ghosh’s subsequent work, *The Glass Palace*. The novel, consisting of seven parts, covers a wide range of colonial history serving as a backdrop on which hapless lives are knitted in order to divulge its deceitful fissures. Rajkumar Raha, a Hindu originally from Chittagong, reaches Mandalay in 1885 at the age of eleven, after all his family members succumb to a disease. The boat in which he is working gets stranded there as it requires a month

long repair and he is directed to a half- Indian woman called Ma Cho, by the boat owner to whom he presents his mother's gold bangle as per her dying wish to take him safely to Chittagong. He gets work as a serving boy in Ma Cho's food-stall at a time when Britain deports King Thebaw and his entourage to Ratnagiri in India and tightens the clutches on Burma. Ma Cho disappears one day as her business dwindles considerably during the British attack. Rajkumar joins as an apprentice of Saya John, Ma Cho's lover, in the timber yards of Rangoon. Rajkumar discerns from a man called Baburao that he could make a fortune as a labour contractor by procuring poor Indian villagers as workers in oil mines in Burma. He buys a timber yard with the money made this way and with Saya John's help. Later, ambitious as he is, he manages to secure a tender of an Indian railway company to supply teak to manufacture sleepers.

After becoming a successful businessman, Rajkumar goes in pursuit of Dolly whom he had dreamt of marrying right from the moment he saw her in the King's palace, known as the "Glass Palace". Dolly, an orphan adopted by the royal family to look after the young Princesses, is the only person who happily stays with them in the Outram House in Ratnagiri. There she befriends the District Collector's wife, Uma Dey. Rajkumar using his influence manages to meet Dolly in the pretext of arriving there as the Collector's personal guest. In the ensuing confusion around the First Princess' pregnancy out of her alliance with their coachman Sawant whom they refer to as Mohanbhai, Dolly gets married to Rajkumar. Upon the Queen's refusal to accept Dolly back into her family, she leaves to Burma with Rajkumar. Uma's relationship with her husband worsens for keeping the secret of the royal family as per her promise to Dolly and the impending marriage of the First Princess to a local which can pose threat to the Collector's official position. In addition to this, Uma's decision

to separate from him drives the Collector to the point of committing suicide by drowning in the sea.

Uma, soon after her widowhood, joins Dolly in Burma and later leaves to Europe with financial help from Rajkumar to discover her own interests. Saya John moves to Malaya after buying an estate there to set up rubber business and to get his son Matthew to settle there with him. Dolly gives birth to Neel and Dinu who is crippled in right leg due to polio at an earlier age. This incident leads to Dolly's mental estrangement from her husband and Neel as most of her time is devoted to Dinu's care. In turn, Rajkumar begins an illicit relationship with a labour woman in Matthew's rubber estate which continues till the birth of an illegitimate son, Ilongo. Matthew and Elsa have a daughter Alison and a son Timothy. Around the same time that Dinu fell ill, King Thebaw passes away from cardiac arrest when the Second Princess elopes with a local and seeks refuge with the Britishers, refusing to return even after her father's summon. Thus she is also denied permission to meet the Queen, like Dolly, thereafter. After sometime the Queen and her daughters are permitted to return to a bungalow in Rangoon, Burma. The First Princess accompanies her family and once they are settled in Burma, she returns dutifully to her husband and children proving to have taken after her mother. With the death of the Queen some years later, the two youngest daughters settle in Burma for the rest of their life.

Meanwhile Uma had been busy working for the Indian Independence League in New York after journeying through Europe and London. She is a celebrated figure now and on her return she charters her journey to Calcutta through Malaya and Burma to meet her friends. Dolly and her children join her in Malaya and the get together is complete with old reminiscences at Matthew's Morningside Estate House. Dinu

develops an interest in Alison, but due to his reluctant nature that grew out of his inferiority feeling on being crippled, he fails to open his mind before her. Instead he turns all his focus on his passion, photography, to the point of getting aloof from others. Uma finds out the truth about Ilongo and gets infuriated towards Rajkumar for cheating Dolly. Yet, just before leaving for Calcutta, after a brawl with Rajkumar, Dolly assures her that Rajkumar is not to be blamed at all. Dolly's only grievance against him is that he refuses to leave Burma even after sensing trouble there for people connected to India. Back home, Uma's niece Manju and Neel get married and return to Burma and Manju's twin, Arjun gets commissioned as a military officer in the Indian army under the British.

Three months after their marriage World War is declared throwing millions of lives into utter chaos and hopelessness. Alison calls Dolly one day to inform her parents' death in a car accident. Dolly sends Dinu to Malaya to console her, but it takes many days for Dinu to reach her as all the routes are jammed due to war. During the stay, Dinu and Alison get close to each other. They are interrupted briefly by Arjun's arrival as his battalion gets posted there in preparation for the impending attacks from the Japanese side. Unable to get any news of Dinu, his family tries to contact Arjun through Manju as they come to know that Arjun is posted near to Alison's place. Dinu refuses to read or acknowledge any of his father's letters as he suspects that it would contain commands to get their share of Morningside Estate from Alison. His present relationship with her and her own difficult situation prevent him from placing such a request before her. He prefers to stay with Alison forever rather than getting back to his family, especially his father whom he considers to be a war-monger. Arjun reports the birth of Neel and Manju's daughter, Jaya, to them. Soon after he leaves from there as the Japanese gain upper hand over the British with

their modern weapons. To make matters worse, many upheavals crop up inside the camp itself owing to the mixed feelings of many Indian soldiers and officers like Hardy, who is very close to Arjun.

Alison's and Dinu's attempt to escape together with Saya John to Singapore fails. They decide that Alison would take Saya John in her car and get to a safer place. Dinu stays back hoping to meet again after order is restored. On their way, they halt in the forest as the car gets heated up and a few Japanese soldiers get hold of the wandering Saya John. In an attempt to protect him, Alison shoots a few Japanese soldiers but realizing that Saya John got killed, Alison shoots herself. On the other side, Rajkumar plans to make money by selling all the hoarded teak and move with his family to Calcutta, but fate ordains otherwise. In a panic caused by the noise of bombs, the elephants in his yard get wild and Neel gets crushed to death between falling logs. Not only does he lose his wealth and son, but now he, Dolly and Manju along with the constantly crying infant are forced to leave Burma utterly famished. On the way Manju, who is devastated after Neel's tragic death, commits suicide by letting herself drown in a river.

In 1942, the year Quit India Movement is launched, Rajkumar and Dolly reach Uma's flat with the child. They succeed in their determination to somehow subsist their lineage in the future through their resilient character. Despite the ailments of age aggravated by pangs of hunger and adverse circumstances, being the people who have put up through difficulties and challenges in the past, they both manage to survive through mutual support and encouragement. That is their only contribution to their future generation now as they have lost all the wealth that Rajkumar had steadily amassed in the years leading to the war. Their return is at a time when Uma has returned after serving a brief imprisonment and has transformed into a public figure,

actively involved as Gandhi's associate in the freedom movement. Initially, though divided in their attitude as far as commitment to nation and the notion of freedom are concerned; ultimately aunt Uma and her nephew Arjun, indirectly, join in the venture to free their motherland India from foreign occupation. For Arjun, it is a gruelling task as it requires him to first come to terms with his own identity and a sense of moral responsibility. Once he succeeds in that, he emerges emotionally unscathed in his further journey to martyrdom despite all the odd factors. He ruminates on this change at a later stage of his career as a military officer. He wonders whether this is how a mutiny begins, when one discovers the contradiction between one's value system and the path that one had been following till then. As a militant, loyalty and faith were two prerequisites for him. Yet it is a fact that British could not have established power without the assistance of a few disloyal Indians. He is now a witness to the end of the Empire too that was built on treachery because of the fact that he, who had the strongest faith in its veracity has started to develop suspicion regarding its continuance in India.

Arjun is badly wounded while trying to escape from Japanese bombing and his batman, Kishan Singh rescues him by hiding themselves inside a pipe for long hours. In a while, they come across Hardy who has joined the Indian National Army supporting the Japanese to fight against the British. Unfortunately, the Army had to be disbanded for fear of the Japanese taking the place of British as rulers rather than providing Indians their hard-earned freedom. Subhas Chandra Bose revitalized it by attracting fresh recruits like plantation workers Ilongo and Rajan along with professionals like Hardy, Arjun, Kishan Singh etc. In the counter-invasion of Burma by British from the Japanese, people like Hardy are arrested and brought to India for trial, but they are considered as war heroes and get to strategic posts after gaining

independence. Arjun continues to fight in Burma, but is slowly left defenceless in the wake of British backlash for deserting the army and also by the attacks from the Burmese Independence Army. He is forced to shoot Kishan Singh, who once risked his own life and saved him, for trying to escape from the group. Still, till the end when he is shot dead by the Burmese Army supporting the Allies, Arjun remains steadfast to his uniform as a soldier fighting for the Indian cause against the British.

With strong-willed relations both on the maternal and paternal sides, Jaya grows into adulthood in Lankasuka flat in Calcutta. After arriving there, Dolly had stayed for another six years till Burma was declared independent, before travelling back in search of Dinu. On finding him, after spending a few days with him and imploring him to visit his father, she moves to the Burmese nunnery, Sagaing, fulfilling her long-standing desire. One year later Dinu returns as per their arrangement to learn of her quiet death a month prior to his arrival. Rajkumar stays back with his granddaughter and lives to see her get married to a doctor at the age of seventeen. Two years after the birth of a son, her husband dies in a train accident and she returns to Lankasuka with her son. Bela, Arjun's younger sister, remains unmarried in her unspoken devotion to Arjun's batman Kishan Singh, who had been married already at a young age, when he came down to Calcutta with Arjun during Manju's marriage. Bela helps Jaya earn a degree and find a job as a college teacher. Once Jaya's son leaves for America on a scholarship, she enrols for a PhD on the history of photography in India, reminding her uncle Dinu's obsession. Unsurprisingly, this common interest prompts her to embark on a journey to find his whereabouts with Bela providing her the lead through Ilongo.

In 1996, Jaya reaches Burma in search of "The Glass Palace: Photo Studio" run by U Tun Pe, Dinu's Burmese given name. Following Alison's departure, Dinu

reached Rangoon in 1942 after considerable delay due to the ongoing war only to find his family evacuated. He remains with his father's friend Doh Say and his son Raymond who are supporting the British Allies. In 1946, they move to Loikaw near Thailand border when Burma is nearing independence. There he sets up a studio and it is here that Dolly meets him. In 1955 after Doh Say's death, he moves back to Rangoon and his friend Thiha Saw helps him to buy a studio there. The Fourth Princess' husband being an artist, they both frequent his studio. Dinu gets married to his assistant there, Ma Thin Thin Aye who had earlier given shelter to him during his passage to Rangoon to find his family members. They remain childless. She is a researcher, a teacher in the University as well as a famous Burmese literary figure. It is through her that Dinu gets into the political current again on hearing about his old friend's daughter, Aung San Suu Kyi's political entry. Jaya actually traces Dinu through one of Suu Kyi's photos taken during a meeting in 1988 credited to him. Later that year he has to spent three years' imprisonment along with his wife, who dies of tuberculosis in 1992. The day before Jaya returns to India, he takes her to meet Suu Kyi in the course of a public address while under house arrest.

On the way to the airport, Dinu enquires about his father's death. Jaya narrates to him a story told to her by her son when he was five-years old. One morning he finds Rajkumar sleeping with Uma in her bed, both naked. On being woken up by the little boy who takes them for dead, very old as they were, they search for their eye-glasses and dentures. The dentures kept together in the tumbler get entangled and Rajkumar, unknowingly, puts it inside his mouth with Uma's denture hanging outside his mouth. On seeing this, Uma reclaims her denture while it is still in his mouth and it becomes a classic kiss as the boy describes, "What I saw that morning in my great-great-aunt Uma's bedroom remains to this day the most tender, the most moving sight

I have ever seen…" (547). They die at around ninety within one month's gap, first Uma followed by Rajkumar. It falls on Jaya's son to write about the history that brought Uma and Rajkumar together, which his mother had undertaken, but could not accomplish. The novel ends as a meta novel written by the great-great-grand son with the above incident as the finale that leaves an imprint on his mind about the unpredictability ingrained in human relationships that make them all the more distinctive. Such relationships are often contained within limits by narrow considerations that rule the world and determine where one should belong and where not. Ghosh voices a similar concern through Nirmal, in *The Hungry Tide*, who quotes Rilke, the poet often in his diary.

In the globalised world, apart from human liaison, culture and ecology are two fields gaining momentum owing to their relevance in day to day life as far as constructing realities are concerned. The thrust is on the socio- political aspects of ecology that permits some to raise plantations while prohibits others from finding a livelihood through water and soil like humans have always done. This injustice in the name of ecology is ridiculed by Kusum when she claims the oppressors to be phony in their sudden love towards animals. Nirmal's writings to Kanai detailing the incidents in the Morichjhápi, the "pepper island" emphasize the mutual dependence of man/culture and nature. While acknowledging the importance of the wilderness; the need to fortify primitive cultures that stand in opposition to the hegemonic cultures, where human interference is always seen as devastating on environment, is something that requires more intense research.

Just like the refugees, the cetacean population of the Sundarbans falls short in comparison to the tigers and the crocodiles who are often enlisted in the endangered category. Thus Ghosh's character Piya, the cetologist interested in researching on the

dolphins, serves as a parallel for the indifferent attitude that authorities adopt towards the settlers. Dolphins are always said to be friendly to men, while at times they get merged with religion too as when Kusum points them out to Nirmal as their goddess Bon Bibi's messenger. Religion has always stood by nature especially with regard to the indigenous cultures which exalt nature to a divine plane. In fact it is the oppressors who pose threat to the ecosystem rather than the poor tribes who live in communion with the nature. Nirmal traces this link when he speaks about the relation between myths and geology, the one between goddesses and rivers.

The destruction of ecology by the powerful with "proper consent," happens to be "well-chosen compromises" (214) as Nilima points out to Nirmal. In 1903, a Scottish "*monopolikapitalist*" (50), Daniel Hamilton bought ten thousand acres of the tide country from the British Government. His dream was to build a new society there, without any kind of 'exploitation,' run by the co-operatives. The irony of this situation is that to accommodate men, nature had to pay: mangrove forest was hacked and animals were killed. The relevant question raised here is whether exploitation of nature does count at all? Forests and rivers are two valuable resources of nature and it is in Sundarbans that one can witness the peaceful coexistence of these twin marvels. When Kanai lands in the Canning station of the Sundarbans for the first time, he is astonished to see the crowded places. The forest of one's imagination is always uninhabited. What is to be noted is that later on this becomes an issue when it comes to the homeless settlers trying to get back to their roots. This makes one wonder whether it is really environmental issues at stake here or some selfish gains, which allows foreigners full access to the forest, to carry out their wishes while the people of the soil are deprived of their rights.

Nirmal, a retired headmaster, takes it upon himself to record the struggles of these refugees, which might otherwise get drowned in this man-made world, just like the mangrove forests destroy the tide country's past in a matter of seconds. That is why he maintains a notebook where he records the events that he witnesses as part of the Morichjhápi Massacre. This he addresses to Kanai, his nephew, who represents for him a "connection to the ears of an unheeding world" (120) and also because it concerns Kusum, Kanai's only friend in Lusbari. In 1978 several Dalits fleeing from the atrocities of the so called "resettlement" camps of the government, decide to settle in their homeland, the tide country from where they had to leave as a result of the war. Anywhere else they would be a misfit as they remark that the rivers and the tides were an integral part of their biological system too. It is intriguing to note that they are the descendants of the true inhabitants of the island, the same people who responded warmly to Hamilton's call. In the name of development, certain section of the society has to pay the price while the benefits are reaped by others. Does their lineage have any role to play here? Or rather, to put it bluntly, the lack of a magnificent one!

No civilization has ever allowed the powerless and the illiterate to realize their dreams, but all the same nothing can stop them from fighting back. They leave no stone unturned to establish contact with influential people, to dismantle the power structure that pictures them as gangsters. Meanwhile, they organize themselves to resist suppression. Nirmal pounces on this opportunity to make himself useful for their purpose, but his wife Nilima dissuades him. Their characters are set in contrast to each other; Nilima supporting the government as she cannot afford to invite their grudge due to her own interests in the welfare of the Badabon Trust and her hospital whereas Nirmal sympathizing with the cause of the settlers which is evident through

his words when he foresees the birth of an ideal country for the oppressed people in the islands of Morichjhápi.

The answer is quick to come from one of the writers invited to mobilize support for them, "You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs" (192). That is, the government will evict them by force even if it involves bloodshed. When power occupies the centre-stage, violence is sure to follow to guarantee its ultimate victory at the cost of several innocent lives. Ghosh, here, forestalls the danger by introducing something that can challenge the power-politics of men: the forces of the tide-country; the winds, storm and the animals because they, as the poet Rilke says:

> already know by instinct
>
> we're not comfortably at home
>
> in our translated world. (206)

Pramod K. Nayar in *An Introduction to Cultural Studies* (2008) describes how Cultural Studies concerns itself with the power relations between the researcher and the object of study which ensures validity. Ghosh and his mouth-piece in this novel, Nirmal have this sort of "reflexivity" due to their proximity to the "subjects" of research and thus the whole account is authenticated. This "recording of experience" (16) based on the context they are part of is significant for Cultural Studies. Ghosh's Bengali ancestry and the experiences he has gained through travelling render him apt for this purpose. In the case of Nirmal, he is only doubtful as to the form of his writing, whether it should "flow, as the rivers did, or would they follow rhythms, as did the tides?" (216). He need not vouch for the truthfulness of his account because these writings are the culmination of his lifetime's ambition.

In 1979, the authorities failing to induce the people out of the government property, resort to violent measures against them resulting in the death of many

including Kusum. In this mindless massacre, nature's design is not counted at all while "conserving ecology" is what is talked about all the time. Nature is not something that should stand apart from man. Isolating nature from man is not a solution for the atrocities against nature. In fact, it is precisely the environment that one is part of that shapes his/her identity. That is why the *bhatirdesh* people find it hard to adjust elsewhere. Similarly the natural world also welcomes such an interdependence which ultimately leads to a bonding between man and nature in a quite healthy manner, where each entity respects the others' rights. The *bhatirdesh* is no exception to this because it has always embraced different cultures in such a way as to amalgamate them into a unique culture of its own, whether it is with regard to language, faith or religion itself.

The violence unleashed by the authorities in the name of the Forest Preservation Act only serves to shatter such a communion between nature and man. This has a devastating effect on nature as the author ironically points out that the action commenced to preserve the forest disrupts the natural habitat in a reckless manner. What is it that prompts a community to risk their life over a place? It surely cannot be something trivial as selfishness or greed, but the very fact that it is only here that they can hope to have an existence, that is why it is called *desh*, the 'country' which renders their life meaningful. Their protest is not a form of defiance, but a meditation "on behalf of bewildered humankind itself" (254). It is not for the government to decide their place but for the tribes who have made themselves worthy of the place, as Ghosh remarks, "Where else could you belong, except in the place you refused to leave". (254)

The attempt to recapitulate the novels undertaken for this research proves that Ghosh as a writer and his characters too refuse to withdraw from the readers' mind

through the treatment of complex affairs in a convincing and awe-inspiring manner which lead to several revelations about history, politics, culture, science etc. This chapter has outlined the themes arising out of the works taken for this study. The characters and their circumstances have been detailed minutely. In the next chapter, the central focus of this research, that is to examine how the treatment of subaltern status by Ghosh has initiated a process by which the binaries dissipate or get reorganized to move away from structures, is undertaken in an extensive manner. The theoretical approach detailed in the second chapter will render the comprehension of the stories outlined in the works under study a novel direction and facilitate further exploration into the status of the subaltern characters. The endeavour is to resolve the contradictory standpoints that only serve to worsen their situation in the guise of safeguarding their rights. As mentioned in the concluding quote, one's position cannot be undermined by a rival if one remains resolute because then in the absence of the power to revolt, deliberate inaction can sometimes operate to unlock opportunities. Such an outlook would be far productive than adopting a victimized position.

PRATHIBHA P “ REDEFINING SUBALTERN DISCOURSE: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE OTHER IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF AMITAV GHOSH. “ THESIS. PG DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND RESEARCH CENTRE ,VIMALA COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), THRISSUR, UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT, 2019.

CHAPTER IV

THE MUTED TERMINOLOGY: ALTERED MARGINS AND REDEFINED NARRATIVE

Ghosh, as understood from the analysis of his works in the previous chapter, unravels the subaltern identities not by speaking for them but by laying bare the structures that mask their identity. While he uses the tool of fiction to achieve this purpose, he creates characters and names to question the structures through them. This approach is never an attempt to exalt one statement over another. Thus he does not fall prey to the practice of constructing discourses himself. Equipped with a zest for anthropological detail, like Foucault, he ties the loosened threads in historical research thereby weaving hitherto unheard characters into the folds of time. The present chapter probes further into the techniques of fiction exploited by him to utilise the maximum potential of the genre to achieve his purpose. This meticulous attempt by Ghosh can be described through the following lines:

> …in deciding to say something, we must as speakers focus on a particular subject, we must at the same time make a claim to authority for ourselves in being able to speak about this subject, and we must, in the process, add to and refine ways of thinking about the subject. It is difficult, if not impossible, to think and express oneself outside these discursive constraints, because, in doing so, one would be considered mad or incomprehensible by others. (Mills 57)

Ghosh has been successful in achieving comprehensibility even without conforming to popular discursive regimes. He exploits complex themes to describe complex individual experiences. His characters act as distinct individuals and not

stereotypes that fit into the collective structure. He represents them in fiction which is termed to influence minds and people may be made to re-frame the social scenario. He stands inside the structure at times, as in IAL where he is also a character, to critique its pitfalls as suggested by the deconstructionists like Spivak. A parallel can be drawn between deconstructive and subaltern interests in that both aim at shattering the myth of the centre. Also noteworthy is the fact that Ghosh's first two novels were published before Spivak's influential essay on the subaltern got critical attention. Hence when she used criticism as a mode of highlighting subaltern situation, he chose a much popular and accessible medium of fiction that can criticise without evidently attracting censure. Spivak's account of the subaltern predicament has been interpreted wrongly many times by many critics. Thus she has herself fallen prey to misplaced cognition just like her subject matter as evident when Morton quotes Gilbert, "If Spivak's account of subaltern silence were true, then there would be nothing but the non-subaltern (particularly the West and the native elite) left to speak or write about" (140).

The subaltern "silence" has been misunderstood in terms of its application, reception and constitution as revealed through Gilbert's statement. At the level of application, it disregards their choice of deliberate silence, simultaneously even their voiced concerns remain unperceived by non-receptive groups and also the structure that constitutes such a voice necessarily obliterates any of their attempts at self-expression. At the same time, the entire acclaimed literature on the marginalised testify to the fact that the subaltern reality can be conveyed to a receptive society, without being tainted with misrepresentations as feared by the critics, even in the form of subjective accounts. In addition, in each of Ghosh's works, a different kind of

narration that involves distinctive modes of subversion to revamp deprived rights marks its uniqueness.

In SL, the narrative flow is often crisscrossed by referring to the past events that are connected to the incident being related in the present. While describing the experiences of the narrator as a nine-year old, there is a short break when he is reminded of an event that happened two years later. Immediately the narrative shifts to a period seventeen years after that event, both of which are connected to the narrator's encounter with another character. Then after unfolding the happenings during that encounter for a while, he connects it to the first incident as he discerns the reason for his alter-ego, Tridib, recounting a false story to his audience which included the nine-year old narrator too. The reference to age in all the instances serves to authenticate these descriptions and grants a historical "precision" to it as in the following instances, "When I was about nine…." (10), "[W]hen we were about 16…." (18), "When we were 14…." (22) and so forth. The abrupt way of introducing characters, coupled with the intermittent shifts characteristic of stream of consciousness, is employed to demarcate the relevance of memory in revisiting a story. For example IIa, the narrator's twin-like cousin whom he loves, is sixteen when she is introduced in the novel. In the course of their conversation, he reminds her of their childhood days when they used to discuss the places that she has travelled to, making the readers aware of his passion for places. To establish this further, he takes the readers a decade later to London where they both visit many places together. Then the narrative returns to their teenage discussing her schools, only to move years forward when the narrator mentions their childhood talk about her school days. IIa dismisses his curiosity for places as a mere childhood fancy. Then the story again rewinds to a point when they are ten-year olds with IIa telling him a story at the end

of which Tridib kindles his imagination with the minute details that differentiate places from one another.

Similarly, soon after the news of May's forthcoming visit to Calcutta is announced for the first time, instead of getting to the arrival, the narrator goes on to a point in future where he and May discuss about that episode. To aggravate its dramatic effect, the narrator traces the time of discussion to the day after Ila's wedding, which comes as a shock to the readers who have not been prepared for such a twist, as is characteristic of conventional works. The story completes a circle by connecting related events part by part irrespective of chronological aptness. Once the time period is established, a later allusion to an incident of that time would begin with a general reference to the context omitting the details. The whole novel unfurls through the eyes of the narrator and in the case of incidents where he is not present, the author is quick to attach an episode wherein the narrator comes to know of it through some other channel. By employing phrases like "come to believe", "imagine him", "I really believed" (3) etc right at the beginning of the novel, Ghosh initiates the process of challenging traditional modes of narration that overlooks the role of imagination and memory in the art of storytelling.

The narrative structure in IAL, though not as complex as SL, too fluctuates between time periods spanning from 1980-81 to 1988, 1990 and going as far back as the known history of Egypt to those between 1131 and 1156. Thus it is a chronicle encapsulating a wider horizon which affords the writer a panoramic view of the journey of human race through centuries and their references in historical records so as to document the buried episodes. In COR, when Alu is believed to be dead by everyone and it is almost determined as the truth, it is Rakhesh's opposing tale that prompts the others to search for him among the rubble that leads to his discovery. The

function of memory in determining facts is foregrounded here. The last memory of Alu that Rakesh has, prior to the accident, is his smiling face and the two sewing machines he tries to protect from damage. These minute details associated with memory often add to its credulity and thus pave way for its acceptance. Ironically though, even those that are fabricated are presented in a believable manner with attention to details as in the case of Tridib's family particulars in SL, "… don't you know he's married and has three children and lives with his widowed mother in a slum near Santoshpur?" (10). This reply – given to the narrator's mention about Tridib's father being a wealthy judge and brother, an economist with the UN – sounds more credible because nobody expects a person from such a background to spent time with the locals in street corners. Thus it is "improbability" that often works against truth. The same people who prove themselves to be gullible by believing Tridib's misrepresentation of facts assume an air of shrewdness by dismissing the narrator's facts as lies.

Information generated from memory, even if true, cannot be always attested by corroborating evidence whereas those that are false are put forward in the most realistic manner. Hence Ghosh's narrator purposefully implies incredulity thereby challenging the notions of truth, "I like to think that Tridib received May's photograph the day he came to Gole park and told us that made-up story" (17). By insisting on the presence of concrete evidence and actual occurrence in place of probability and thought processes, many incidents get buried in the past leaving history incomplete. Ghosh prioritises the function of imagination too in the realm of reality as he feels that it is equally trustworthy and important, especially to the person who imagines, as when the narrator speaks about the bearing of the place Dhanmundi in his mind map. Though imagination might be unique to a person, its relevance is not

diminished in the least because for that person it stands as concrete as reality. The author's craft is enhanced by his reliance on history to reinforce individual beliefs and to tag apparently diametrical countries together through its citizens. The following critic cites such a travail undertaken in IAL:

> Ghosh chose to study a civilization, one that was subject to a process of exoticization and estrangement by colonial orientalism that was similar to that of his own. The significance of this is apparent in the way he uses history to bring Egypt close to India by setting up a series of exchanges between different interactive sites located across the two countries. (Chatterji 96-97)

Apart from historical evidences, personal communications also serve to sustain relationships beyond temporal and spatial boundaries. Ben Yiju's marriage in IAL is confirmed and assigned a period by linking the dates of the letters addressed to him by fellow traders wherein they mention his son and gifts sent on his behalf. Although those letters are silent regarding the identity of his wife, Ghosh supports the historian Goitein in his supposition that Yiju married his slave Ashu as her emancipation seems to have been accompanied by a celebration, not long after acquiring her custody which is quite unlike the custom then. Another indirect reference to her occurs, revealing their relationship, through Yiju's note of an amount due to his brother-in-law, Nair. Derision of such means to ascertain identities that are not validated by accepted documents, hinder the researches based on manuscripts that date back to antiquity. In most cases such tools are ridiculed and the findings arising thereof are invalidated. In a modern example in the novel, Hussein refers to a conversation between his brother Nabeel and Ghosh years back and he reproduces it before Ghosh aptly, convincing the latter of the "impossible, deeply moving, defiance of time and the laws of hearsay" (269). Sonali's comment in CC, "that legends aren't

always untrue" (25) echoes a similar thought. In GP, Dinu while speaking about the role of a photographer, reminds his students, in an indirect way, of their rights and the challenges that lie before them and suggests that truth is something that comes into existence when focused on by the photographer. Thus a picture simultaneously leads to the birth of a photographer as well as his creation. The legends of Sunderbans and its religious myths narrated by Nirmal in his diary are repeatedly substantiated in the HT through various events happening in the lives of different characters. The power mechanism working behind such a marginalisation of facts, arising out of memory and imagination which could in fact be true, creates dominated groups in the society.

In *Post-colonial Transformation* (2001), Bill Ashcroft signals towards a positive shift in the predicament of the dominated groups. He clarifies that power struggles often occur as a result of configuring power vertically wherein certain sections are placed at the bottom and others, being at the top, occupy a vantage position. When such a constitution leads to victimisation through coercion, it can be termed as destructive in nature. In a better setting, on the other hand, power operates "dynamically, laterally and intermittently". He further correlates this with the rhizomic structure that "propagates laterally and spatially" (50). He scrutinises imperialism's operation in the past to elaborate on the rhizomic distribution of power mechanisms. Here the stakeholders are all spread across horizontally, in the same plane, at different points interacting or revolting with each other based on their respective degrees of relevance. This structure is considered to be the actual model of power relations in a society which capacitates resistance too like in the case of the one that led to the downfall of imperialism. This type of effective resistance is termed "interpolation" by him and its significance in claiming one's rights is underscored thus, "The successful disruption of the territory of the dominant occurs, not by

rejecting or vacating that territory but by inhabiting it differently. When we understand the rhizomic nature of power, we may better understand the potential for its transformation by the dominated" (52-53). Interpolation is understood clearly by placing it in contrast to Althusser's concept of "interpellation" wherein the subjects are brought into existence through ideological apparatuses.

Such a subject is formed for the purpose of diverting critical attention from the attempts to monopolise hegemony and from the interpellator's inadequacies. While certain subjects are brought into existence, certain others are obliterated in order to emerge as exclusive contenders for authority. This process is initiated by endorsing certain unwritten rules aimed at appropriating hitherto disdained notions. The concept of nationalism is one such tool that undergoes frequent revision to suit the needs of the authorities. In COR, the old Malik of Ghazira is ousted from power by his brother Amir with British help and in the pretext of working for the country's development, he and his friends turn the land into a business hub dismissing the religious sentiments of its people, the Mawalis, as "harmless nonsense" (253). In IAL, the author comes across two similar stories of developmental ventures made to change its course in order to safeguard religious sentiments, one in Egypt and the other in India. Nationalism and religiousness thus come in conflict sometimes and it becomes difficult to discern which of the two stands supreme in determining one's identity.

A country to call as one's own is an integral part of one's identity which, if deprived, can lead to formidable situations. That is the reason why Karthamma in COR, on the ship to Ghazira, refuses to give birth to her child without getting a few forms signed which, according to her, would secure the rights due to her child. This pathetic incident reveals the conditions prevailing in a society that bestows more importance to rules and documents than individual freedom. Sometimes generations

of people suffer in the name of "nation", which, at times, may only be a tract of forest as the ethnic groups demand in Burma. Ghosh muses in ALB, "What could nationhood possibly mean, for a landlocked, thinly populated tract of forest? What made it worth dying for; for sacrificing three generations?" (DICO 75). The Karenni clan's senior official cites two reasons for this to Ghosh; one, that they have been an independent section and not part of Burma right from the beginning which they want to maintain because involvement with other cultures would lead to several compromises on their value system. They are aware of the Burmese government's strategy to seize the profit from timber business that they have been running successfully. Secondly, being devout Christians, they are against drug trafficking and want to "end the cross-border black-market trade" (84) which, again, they are afraid might go out of their control once they become part of the country. Even though Ghosh doubts that these policies of the leadership will be echoed by the members, he is stunned by their persistence in continuing this enervating struggle. He specifies, "An insurgency… is not just an army and a gathering of camp-followers. It is simultaneously a cause, an archive, an economy: an institution which provides for itself and develops a life that it will not cheaply relinquish" (85). That is why it consists of, not just Burmese nationals but also Indian immigrants in Burma for whom this is an opportunity to demonstrate that they are not *kala* and are as eligible to be a part of that country in which they grew up as those who are born there.

The individual existence is further complicated by attributing certain symbols to the atypical aspect of their identity. Alu's atrophied thumb is projected by Ghosh in such a way as to challenge such symbols that restrict individuality by confining it within popularised versions of beauty. The deformed eyes and lips of Ann Taha never stand in the way of his business with the people in his village. The gap-toothed boy

figuring in various periods and the partly paralysed hands of Romen Haldar alias Lutchman or Laakhan serve to heighten the enigma surrounding them. It is Dinu, with his polio inflicted leg, who manages to outlive all the others and achieve name and fame. His crippleness is not a weakness for him; rather he believes, "my body protects me" (GP 509). Kusum's "chipped front tooth" and short hair makes her stand apart from the other girls on her island. Her head is shaved after a narrow escape from typhoid and she acquires an "invalid" (HT 90) status owing to it. The battles that she has to undergo right from her childhood are numerous. Starting with her father's death by a tiger-attack, her long-time separation from her mother who is forced into prostitution in the name of work, her narrow escape from sharing her mother's fate, her husband Rajen's untimely death by a train accident, loss of her homeland and the poverty she is subjected to along with Fokir, her young son; she emerges stronger in spirit and secures a place for herself in the minds of Horen, Nirmal, Nilima, Kanai and many others in the land who apprehend her resilient nature. She dies in the massacre planned by the authorities to evict people from the Sunderbans. Similarly, Dantu and his daughter Uma's prominent front teeth also serve to overlook the physical peculiarities that develop feelings of inferiority and worthlessness. Otherwise as Ghosh points out, it will only lead to one's "own destruction in giving flesh to the whims of capital" (COR 203). Ghosh creates characters like Isma'il who can predict danger in order to counter such flawed representations. These subaltern subjects thereby become equipped, through interpolation, to question the roles assigned to them that situate them as powerless and therefore somebody to be subjugated.

Interpolation is initiated by the subject through "insertion, interruption, interjection" (Ashcroft 48). Here the subject is not at the receiving end but is the one that demands action to ensure just treatment by the authority. The process of

interpolation is initiated in COR by Balaram and his friends Gopal and Dantu by becoming part of the Society for the Dissemination of Science and Rationalism in rebellion against the Science Association. Instead of rejecting everything associated with religion as superstition, the Rationalists tend to accept everything after careful scrutiny and draw a strict line between unadulterated religious ideas and those that have evolved over time with business motives. This act of insertion is complemented by a series of interruption tactics which include Balaram taking over the helm of the Rationalists, the various campaigns he launches while in college and in his village. He states their objective thus, "We want something immediate, something none of us can turn our backs on; something which holds a new picture of ourselves in front of our eyes… at least we can make a beginning". (COR 111)

Most of the techniques of subordination work psychologically by debilitating the notions related to one's identity. The issues pertaining to one's existence that make one uncomfortable are often cited as negative and something to be avoided whereas those that have no significance to one's psyche are frequently projected as important. The means to surpass these diversion tactics is determined by Balaram through preparing the members against diffident thoughts. He interpolates vehemently by stipulating them to even expect to be mortified for their candour:

> Our embarrassment will be the first sign of our victory. If we're embarrassed, it will be *because* the matter is so close to us; *because* talking of our underwear in public means thinking about ourselves in a new and different way. None of us was embarrassed to talk about the Cosmic Boson precisely because it meant so little to us. This is different, and for that very reason we must expect, indeed hope, to be embarrassed." (112)

This kind of advance preparation in response to emotional assaults is warranted in cases of extreme and direct intrusion rather than the self-inflicting stance of violent reaction or disillusionment. The infringements get access through high sounding labels and appeal to one's sense of bafflement when confronted by intricacies. Balaram proceeds further by adopting the rival's modus operandi of maintaining deliberate silence or revealing the operation of their association only in parts to evoke a sense of vigour in the minds of the others. When his crusade in college ends up with his hospitalisation, the argument that he has with his friend Gopal brings out his invincible spirit. Rather than lamenting over the adverse circumstance, he tries to find out the meaning behind the occurrence and proclaims, "I *shall* stand my ground, for Reason has nothing to fear" (97). During the war, when refugees swarm up in Lalpukur increasing the risk of an epidemic, it is this fearless attitude that saves the situation. The solution to this issue, as it appears to Balaram, is to disinfect the settlements. He chooses carbolic acid introduced by Pasteur for the purpose over Koch's mercury-based liquid because, according to him, "There was a *historical* legitimacy about carbolic acid" (65). The readers are reminded of Koch's opposition to Pasteur's findings until its veracity became undeniable.

The impossibility of suppressing facts can be interpreted as an advantageous step in the fight for judicious representation. Balaram's blameless cleaning spree is approached with mounting suspicion, arising out of a fear of the unknown, by the rich man in the village, Bhudeb Roy. Roy is sceptical of Balaram's association with the local weaver Shombhu Debnath too, as the latter is having an affair with Roy's wife, Parboti-debi. The husband and wife are presented as being in sharp contrast to each other with regard to both their attitude and physique. She is the only person who succeeds in truly defeating Roy by conceiving from Debnath, a lower caste man while

Roy is totally against any kind of contact with such people. Amidst a celebration organised in the school by Roy to secure grants through influencing people in strategic positions, Balaram exposes the hollowness of the ceremony by dismantling the statue-like image of Goddess Saraswati and notes, "This is not Learning…. This is vanity" (33). The disintegration of the holy image in the minds of the believing community leads to a critical juncture in the plot where Balaram's act interrupts the subtext of the socially constructed images. This culminates in the founding of his School of Reason consisting of the Department of Pure Reason and the Department of Practical Reason.

Shombu demands Alu to cut off his thumb as Dronacharya did in *Mahabharatha* to deprive Ekalavya of his skill in archery as it would pose threat to his favourite student, Arjuna. In Shombu's case it is not out of favouritism, but his loathing for politics especially since it is promoted by Bhudeb Roy, his opponent and also his secret lover's husband. More importantly he feels his art would be degraded by dedicating it to the motifs associated with politics and the rich as woven by Alu. After this incident, Alu makes Shombu's daughter and his own love interest, Maya, the subject for his next piece of cloth. Thus he redeems the art of weaving from the influential quarter to a place where it actually belongs, that of the excluded category, as wanted by his teacher in order to resist discourses.

Alu carries forward the tradition in al-Ghazira by propagating the importance of cashless economy by avoiding paper-money in order to prevent the spread of germs. Power, which is often accompanied by money that determines agency, is challenged through this radical act. The attempt to capture the alleged terrorist, Alu, suffers set back because of the timely intervention of Zindi who had prepared beforehand for their escape. Patel, the informer, redeems himself by committing

suicide once he regains sense from the drunken stupor and realises the intensity of his perfidious act. Das, on deputation from India to capture Alu, is least affected by the failure of their mission, but for the impossibility of meeting Patel one more time, as he considers meeting him, "the only worthwhile thing that happened to me (Das) here" (352). Das comprehends that he is also only a tool in the power-game that will be discarded once it is over, thus opening up a space to interrupt the current directed at him whereas officer Lal flows with it unaware of its course that might lead him to perilous pits. The sharp contrast in their approach towards restraining measures emphasises the enormity of interpolation carried out by Das.

Only those who interpolate secure an opportunity to escape from the ploy of the dominator. When Zindi comes to know of Patel's fate, she alerts Hajj Fahmy of the impending danger and tries to stop him from executing the shopping plans involving the entire migrant community, but she is disappointed when he refuses to take her seriously. This carefree attitude leads to his death along with many other innocent people. The ones who manage to escape; Zindi, Boss, Kulfi and Alu board a ship about which Zindi had heard before. Later Zindi repents her decision when Das follows them to Algeria without giving them any respite. She correctly predicts Kulfi's imminent death, "one of us isn't going to leave this house alive" (424). Such intuitive feelings are beyond the realm of science and are hence discouraged. The microbiologist Uma clarifies this dilemma with her outright statement, "… despotic science forbade you to tell them the one thing that was worth saying; the one thing that was true. And that was: There's nothing wrong with your body – all you have to do to cure yourself is try to be a better human being". (446)

In SL, Tridib teaches the narrator that interpolation also refers to the critical standpoint that one takes at moments of control that operate indirectly through

imparting false information, “If you believe anything people tell you, you deserve to be told anything at all” (12). When one adopts a defensive role rather than that of complaining, one would be protected from being a victim to deception. Tridib acts as the narrator’s role model who guides him against the pitfalls of the society and shows him how to tactfully counter such strategies. He instructs the narrator to develop his imaginative faculty to such an extent that whenever somebody draws a wrong picture, it would fail to fit into the scenario that has been fed into his mind and would thereby bring out its lapse. This kind of passive insertion is carried out by the narrator throughout the novel which culminates in his unravelling of the truth behind the riots in Calcutta and Dhaka – that they are not wholly unrelated. IAL also documents such a disturbance in Iraq having both positive and negative impact on the lives of Egyptians who migrated to Iraq for work, and their families. Ghosh interpolates the role of other countries too which silently dictate the game while the players of the two countries directly involved are the ones to lose.

A fitting example of interruption in SL is the police raid at the narrator’s grandmother’s college when they arrest a boy from their class branding him as a terrorist. All of them are surprised to see the shy silent boy, who always went unnoticed as he sat in the back bench, being taken as a captive. His silence proves to be a camouflage as far as his strong determination to overthrow the British from India is concerned. The grandmother upholds the right to existence, as illustrated in the novel. She is portrayed as a representative of the upper middle class and her mentality is typical in this respect. As a steadfast believer in democracy and the nationalist spirit, she expects others too to share her feelings towards one’s nation. Just as she does not want others to force their way into her country, she cannot imagine settling in another country as she feels that everyone rightfully belongs to a country either by

making sacrifices on their own or due to those made by the ancestors. Yet in another instance, she is quick to condemn rather than sympathise with the refugees who are forced to leave their country of birth and adapt to unhygienic living conditions. Her son jolts her back to reality by pointing out that she also shares the same status, being originally from Dhaka even though she migrated to India before Partition. These occasions in the novel raise the concerns around the question of freedom and nationality in order to depict their futility when compared to the fate of homeless people left to survive in a world divided in the name of religion and narrow minded politics.

This historical partition of India and Bangladesh is further taken up in HT. The problems faced by the migrants from Bangladesh after Partition are not solved by the resettlement camps in central India. There they are subjected to harsh treatment and despite their vulnerability, were constantly supervised. They are held captives and those who try to escape are penalised. Apart from the actions of the authorities resulting out of mistrust, the local people also treat them as "intruders" (118) and they are further incapacitated due to their inability to communicate in the language of the area. While creating a migrant-friendly status outside the country, in actuality they are marginalised in the new setting too. Bon Bibi, the local deity is believed to protect the tide country and its people from dangers. Even she divides the land into two – one part is kept as wild and the other habitable, "order was brought to the land of eighteen tides, with its two halves, the wild and the sown, being held in careful balance…. Until human greed intruded to upset this order" (103). Nirmal is fascinated by the valid status accorded to these mythical borders by Kusum and Horen which is more real to them than the geographical borders that *Tha'mma* seeks out in SL. This fragment from myth displays the "law of the forest" before humans who pride

themselves on their ethical standards which is often at odds in practice. The migrants are deprived of their individuality and the atrocities against them have serious implications for the nation as a whole. These bring out the novelist's stand in these issues and play an important part in the course of interruption.

Ghosh also interpolates the significance of riots in one's life when compared to war. Even though the latter is of a severe magnitude with regard to the places and weapons involved, the former has more of an impact on the participating society's customary life; sometimes resulting in similar death rates. Unfortunately it goes unrecorded or not as emphasised as wars, owing to its irrelevance to the majority. Thus riots are pictured as examples of subalternised events that have to struggle to get public attention. To revive the status of such riots, Ghosh's narrator exhumes the newspaper article about the riot that occurred on 10 January 1964 in Calcutta. He connects the day of a Test Cricket Match between India and England to that of the riot and finally succeeds in pinning down the date of the riots because as he mentions, "I would not let my past vanish without trace" (221). In addition, he also discovers that it is linked to the riots that happened the previous day in Khulna which killed Tridib. He, at first, blames his father for neglecting the threat that lay in allowing grandmother, Tridib and May to leave for Dhaka but learns through further research that there was not a slightest inkling of the surging violence in any of the newspapers of that time as they were completely silent on that issue. The media's silence thus proves to be fatal for his family, bringing to one's notice the urgency in decoding the silences at the right time. This same riot features in IAL to signify "an Indian's terror of symbols" which may not be intelligible to people from a single cultural environment where violence arising out of certain symbols associated with religion is inexistent. Ghosh deplores, "The stories of those riots are always the same: tales that

grow out of an explosive barrier of symbols – of cities going up in flames because of a cow found dead in a temple or a pig in a mosque; of people killed for wearing a lungi or a dhoti, depending on where they find themselves…" (IAL 171). Here these symbols, apart from revealing one's identity, also cause dread in times of crisis. Once violence ceases, even the newspapers forget about them after creating the initial rumble:

> …those other events, party splits and party congresses and elections poured out their eloquence in newspapers and histories for years and years after they were over, as though words could never exhaust their significance. But for these other things we can only use words of description when they happen and then fall silent, for to look for words of any other kind would be to give them meaning, and that is a risk we cannot take any more than we can afford to listen to madness. (SL 228)

In GP, the Burmese accept Indians among them in the initial years without any inhibition. After the British invasion, with Indians on the forefront as soldiers and the subsequent progress of Indian businessmen, like Rajkumar, who even get married to Burmese; the natives are antagonised against the foreigners. This results in riots leading to substantial loss of lives and property on both sides. Some of the reverberations are felt in quite unexpected places like the asylum and the jail where many people are killed in the name of freedom. Yet the redeeming factor, as with violence all over, is the people who help each other despite their race and prove their humanity. When Dolly persuades Rajkumar to move to India to avoid further trouble, he questions her as to how she could be convinced that they will be safer there considering the reports of riots happening there. The irony is that they would still be condemned as outsiders there as they have spent most of their lives elsewhere helping

to build the economies of those countries. Rajkumar's confession to Dolly regarding Burma's place in his heart demarcates the severity of the situation, "This is a golden land – no one ever starves here…. I don't think I could ever love another place in the same way" (310). He considers those people lucky who can live forever in their land of birth. It is just a matter of luck as far as he is concerned as it is not something assured in anyone's case. Here, the question of nationality that has been raised in the earlier works is again scrutinised to reconsider its actual significance. That is, whether it is attributed by birth or by one's deeds? This, when linked with the question of migration, can open up a new outlook towards people like refugees and expatriates who get marginalised and attacked due to their national status.

While on most occasions, belonging to the same nation comes as a positive, there are still others where this takes a negative turn. Uma's nephew Arjun and his friend Hardy face this sort of extreme humiliation as officers in the Indian army serving under the British. They belong to the first generation of Indians who joined as officers and the Indians working under them are only used to British as their superiors which is "the source of their prestige and pride" (281), even a privilege in their eyes. In Hardy's case it is more profound because many of his subordinates are elders from his own village who had worked with his father. The feeling of humiliation suffered by these people is so much that they approach the British Commanding Officer to cancel his appointment and cite his love of an Indian food, *chapati*, as an example to state that he is not eligible to be an officer unless he gets used to the British food habits. They are unaware of the implications of their hatred which is ultimately directed against themselves as they are speaking against their own habits. Arjun contemplates on the paradox underlying the situation, "how much deeper was the self-loathing that led a group of men to distrust someone for no reason other than that he

was one of them?" (282). These two episodes serve to highlight the hypocrisy inherent in claims of brotherhood and sacrifice based on nationality. It is just an excuse employed by opportunists to fulfil their ulterior motives; at times it is treated as strength and at others it becomes a binding factor.

In HT, Piya's status as an American, though her parents are expatriate Indians, make her distinct and earn undue attention from the Indians while on a research on Irrawady dolphins. In contrast, as a student in her lecture class in US, she is "the little East Indian girl" (74). Her inability to speak Bengali adds to nail her as an outsider in India, vulnerable to deception. The boldness imparted to her by the Western culture makes her alert to such violation, yet she cannot completely escape them. She manages to win, through experience, in minor situations like getting into a crowded train, securing herself a seat and finding her way to remote locations, but when it comes to real challenges like dealing with the authorities and getting them to assist her work, she faces severe blows. With time and space to settle into the new environment, she divulges her tactics to carry on with her work uninterrupted after the initial insignificant losses. She attributes her interest in the field not just to the chance to work for the cause of animals but also "for the life it offered as for its intellectual content – because it allowed her to be on her own, to have no fixed address, to be far from the familiar, while still being a part of a loyal but loose-knit community" (126). The community of cetologists, though scattered in different parts of the world, is bound by their common concerns and silent manner of work in an area where most of the time they have problems with communication due to language barriers.

Piya's interaction with Fokir is an exception to this because they manage to communicate with signs, drawing and sometimes even silence. The possibility of such an exchange is decipherable to Moyna who requests Kanai to warn Fokir against

getting close to Piya. She is misled to believe that Kanai's role as an interpreter might prevent any such developments. When Kanai questions her choice of placing that responsibility on him than doing it herself, she replies to him that it can be done effectively only by an outsider. Here, again, the function of words in conjuring meaning out of language is pointed out by her, "words are just air…. When the wind blows on the water, you see ripples and waves, but the real river lies beneath, unseen and unheard. You can't blow on the water's surface from below…. Only someone who's outside can do that" (258). This metaphorical representation of how communication happens with and without language solves many of the riddles associated with language's role in establishing power. Sometimes certain "blows" are induced to interrupt the flow of meaning so that the desired message is conveyed rather than what it really suggests by the relationship between words.

The power that the words of a language possess to incite subdued feelings of one's right and the strength to voice against injustices, makes the hegemonic structures prefer silence on occasions or, by far, suppress attempts of expression through citing those details of one's personality that are projected as demeaning. Ghosh experiences this while in Egypt as he is unwelcome in Cairo restaurants and shops due to his rustic Arabic. These strategies are rendered futile as language can shatter such boundaries easily by providing meaning at unexpected points. This makes Ghosh wonder about the function of language during the challenging phase of his research that required him to read ancient manuscripts which were closer to the fellaheen dialect and observe that "this simple, rustic dialect could be of any use in so rarified a domain of erudition as the reading of twelfth-century Judaeo-Arabic manuscripts" (IAL 80). It is this language which, though ridiculed by educated and

rich people, enables Ghosh to interpret Ben Yiju's documents because it is much closer to its roots and hence original.

Intensified by a sense of fulfilment offered by such experiences, Ghosh steers further the interrupting exercise by questioning the place of travellers like Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta in comparison to other medieval travellers during Yiju's time like Abu Said Halfon and Abu Zikri Sijilmasi. While some travellers make it to history, some others remain unknown based on the status of the cultures that they represent. This tug of war between cultures has lead to the marginalisation of not just people but also Gods and deities. Ghosh's efforts to identify Bomma's correct name and to get to his root takes him to Professor Viveka Rai, an expert "on Tulu folklore and philology" (201). It is through a film that the professor introduces Ghosh to the Tulu warrior-deity Berma to whom the Bomma owes his origins. With the advent of Sanskrit and the high Brahminical culture that it stood for, this local deity got "assimilated to the Sanskritic deity 'Brahma'" (208). Even without the knowledge of the divine root of the name, the traders like Ishaq refered to him as "Shaikh". The name lost its reverence during the modern times to such an extent that even locals consider it ignoble and prefer modern ones instead. When Ghosh visits one of the temples which was earlier dedicated to this deity, he is disappointed to find that it has also embraced the modern Gods in the name of renovation. But the interpolation is still made possible as he notices the presence of the figure of the original deity behind the newly installed one.

Thus, eventually, the right to existence is defended which is why the community of fishermen, Magaviras, who adore this God also exert their might as "the natural associates of Middle Eastern sailors and seafarers, partly because of their expertise in sailing, and partly because of their position on the margins of the caste-

structure of Hindu society which would have rendered them free of the restrictions that might have hampered other groups in trade and travel" (222). Thus marginalisation in the name of caste turns out to be the liberalising factor as far as their vocation is concerned. This mutual understanding between the natives and the foreigners has benefitted humanity. It is when this got replaced by thoughts of superiority and dominance that invasions took place as marked in history with the arrival of people like Vasco da Gama. Ghosh draws attention to the fact that Vasco da Gama arrived only three hundred and fifty years after Ben Yiju's departure from Mangalore. Ironically, it is the invader who finds place in history whereas many friendly voyages have taken place before it. Most importantly the unity, trust and exchanges between such marginalised people from different corners of the world contribute towards their success to a large extent as clarified by Ghosh:

> The vast network of relationships that Ben Yiju fitted himself into in Mangalore was clearly not a set of random associations: on the contrary, it appears to have had a life of its own, the links being transmitted between generations of merchants, just as they were from Madmun to Ben Yiju. Membership in the network evidently involved binding understandings of a kind that permitted individuals to commit large sums of money to joint undertakings, even in circumstances where there was no direct communications between the participants, despite their cultural, religious and linguistic differences. (230)

A powerful example of coordination between participants along with keeping a conscious distance from each other bordering on silence seen in CC forms the basis of their cult's interpolation. Their deity, Mangala-bibi's clay figure is just a pair of black and white eyes with the models of a pigeon and a microscope on her right and

left respectively. This pattern of insertion into the normally prevalent models and modes of worship denotes the primary point of deviation. It is the unspoken kinship between the members of the group, despite not knowing each other, that maintains their struggle. The presence of a scientifically approved tool like the microscope with the representatives of a community scorned by Western science interrupts the carefully constructed cosmos of the Occident that estrange the Orient. In HT one comes across a similar conjoining of the technology of the sophisticated with the technique of the naive. In order to map the area inhabited by the dolphins using an echo sounder, Piya directs Fokir to row the boat in a straight line so that she can collect data regarding the depth of the water. In assisting her, he also carries on with his business of catching crabs by putting a line with intermittent baits.

Contrary to her anxiety that both their works might be disrupted by this, his line actually ensures that the boat maintains a straight line as she requires. The return to the point from where they began and the frequent breaks to record the sound is utilized by him to harvest the crabs and lay fresh lines. The line helps them reach the exact point from where they began, dispensing the need for her to rely on GPS for this purpose. On her part when she determines the next route five meters away from the earlier one with the help of GPS, he could put lines in new places each time which improved his catch. This compatibility is worthwhile not just to overrule the superiority of technology over skill but also to diminish the differences based on which people are often distanced. It often bears out detrimental to disregard merit so as to achieve an upper hand. Piya is amazed by the incredibility of the liaison, “one of the tasks required the input of geostationary satellites while the other depended on bits of shark-bone and broken tile. But that it had proved possible for two such different

people to pursue their own ends simultaneously – people who could not exchange a word with each other… seemed almost miraculous". (141)

In a similar way, the liaison between people aware of each and every rhythm of the nature and its creatures is manifested before her while on a previous expedition. She witnesses how the fishermen catch fish with the help of dolphins. The dolphins have the habit of pooling in fish to a point in the river where they get submerged in the soft mud. These fish are then harvested by the dolphins. The fishermen throw their nets on such fish pools created by dolphins swimming together in tight circles. This serves to drive the escaping fish back to the net. This also results in many of the fish getting submerged in the river floor due to the pressure of the net, which becomes the dolphins' feast. Piya marvels at this "symbiosis between human beings and a population of wild animals" (169) which is beyond the comprehension of the development oriented sects that function only through commands and oppression.

Another manner of interruption is to expose the real intention behind the "civilizing mission" of the coloniser as King Thebaw does in GP when he realises that most of his valuable gems have disappeared during the journey. When enquired about this, the British officials are offended. Thebaw, instead of being distressed, pities their action and thinks that he would have given some of the good ones to them himself, had they asked for it directly. Ghosh draws another magnificent metaphor for interjection when Saya gives the teak and mint leaves to Rajkumar for inspection. The mint plant can grow on the tree in such a way that it can rise as high as the tree as Saya narrates to him in the following example:

> There was a teak tree in Pegu once, with a trunk that, measured one hundred and six feet from the ground to its first branch. Imagine what a mint's leaf would be like if it were to grow upon a plant that rose more than a hundred

> feet into the air, straight up from the ground, without tapering or deviation… its first leaves appearing almost at the top, clustered close together and outspread, like the hands of a surfacing diver…
>
> The mint leaf was the size of Rajkumar's thumb while the other would have covered an elephant's footprint; one was a weed that served to flavor soup while the other came from a tree that had felled dynasties, caused invasions, created fortunes, brought a new way of life into being… between the faint hairiness of the one and the bristling coarse-textured fur of the other, there was an unmistakable kinship, a palpably familial link. (70-71)

The comparison here is poignant as the writer suggests how the replacement of vertical power relations with horizontal rhizomic relation can alter the circumstances. The keywords from the above quote, "straight", "without tapering or deviation" and "clustered" can be related to the interpolating tactics that are to be executed as a united group by the subjugated to withstand combating forces. Thus as always it is from nature that man can learn to be wise by following her modal. The Queen stresses the power of the Indian soil in keeping its people together and sneers at the British plan to isolate the King and his family by deporting them to India. The land, not just accepts its people, but the refugees too in the same way. Ironically its people chose Dolly who is in exile over Uma, the collector's wife, an Indian, as they feel "more at home with prisoners than gaolers" (116) because the latter represents the colonial force. In all the above cases, the insurgent attempts become successful in creating an impact on the respective societies and the act of interjection is made complete. Interpolation can be accomplished only with a daring spirit and an ability to think of alternative measures to escape unscathed from unpredictable and sudden aggressive measures adopted by the authorities.

Nature even teaches how to resist forced disciplining strategies. Matthew clarifies this to Uma through an example from his rubber estate. While most of the trees produce the right amount of latex, there would be one or two trees that do not produce anything at all. This exception, in spite of the trees being similar in all respects, is explained in different ways by botanists, geologists and soil specialists. The explanation that appears coherent to Matthew is that of the tappers themselves as they are the ones who get to observe those particular trees on a day to day basis. They say, "that there are trees that won't do what the others do, and that's what they say--this one is fighting back". A discipline has been forced into the wild nature by planting trees and making them work according to human law and order. The trees may seem domesticated from the outside but people who are close to such tamed nature, often realise that the moral principles of the human world does not affect it at all. Instead it works by its own law, it vehemently fights back intrusion and thus some trees are kind of "rebels by instinct". (233)

The significant conclusion that one arrives at from these considerations is that the act of resistance cannot be carried out successfully by moving out of the dominant discourses, but primarily by "not leaving the space, yet transforming it" (Ashcroft 55). Only such a kind of transformation can gain permanence; that which accepts the "space" that has to be altered in order to work towards the betterment of it and to achieve one's end. A detailed analysis would entail a paradigm shift towards an earned position rather than a space and status quo assigned to the subaltern as such. In such circumstances of imposed subjugation, a defiant outlook emerging out of strong consciousness of one's own identity has to be adopted. While interpellation refers to the "strategy" employed to dominate the subject, "tactic" is the subject's interpolation or redeeming factor that it presents before power.

In COR when Balaram tries to discipline his nephew Alu with a timetable, the latter is quite unaffected by such sophistication on his uncle's part. Each of Balaram's strategies is dismissed by Alu's ostensible tactics. Balaram and his close friend Gopal, while in college, are part of a society called "Rationalists" which holds "Reason rescues Man from Barbarity" as its motto. In contrast to the Science Association and science itself that gives prominence to laboratories, "Their aim was the application of rational principles to everything around them – to their own lives, to society, to religion, to history" (49). Science and reason have often been figured as weapons to triumph strong over the weak, whereas Balaram locates their roots in history and accords the credit to the world itself and not to any particular locus. Later tactics again surfaces when Jyoti Das, the police officer, traces the suspected terrorist Alu to Kerala with the help of his associate, Dubey. Although the local prisoner refuses to confess at first, he later reveals Alu's escape to al-Ghazira on a boat two days prior only when he is convinced of his victory over them despite being beaten harshly. His non-cooperation in the beginning gives them hope that Alu might yet be within their reach; later it turns out to be his tactic to beat them in their own game. Dubey's failure in learning the local language proves to be a weapon aptly utilised by the rioting crowd swarming outside the interrogation room.

A similar instance can be discerned when Alu succeeds in learning the complex dialect of the village, Lalpukur within two years of his arrival thereby depriving the villagers of the chance to ridicule his uncle Balaram in his presence. In the same way the Queen in GP learns the Indian language while in exile and makes it a point to use it with the officials. The British, being foreign, are not affected much by this as some of them even know the language. Whereas the Indians who do not know the language owing to the multicultural character of the country and are not either that

comfortable with English to switch tongues, find themselves at odds because “the Queen of Burma could speak Hindustani better than they” (109). Here the natives who favourcolonisation out of selfishness are grouped with the invaders and hence slighted. Dinu, while speaking about the tactics evolved by the rebels to go unnoticed, mentions, “nothing that is worth saying can be spoken in ordinary language” (509). They speak in metaphorical language. Here, photography is used as a medium to kindle the feeling of independence, “photography too is a secret language”. (510)

Kanai, in HT, makes fun of Piya’s excuse for not knowing Bengali due to her non-proximity with that language by stating that then he should never have learned English at all as he grew up in Calcutta. Here again, it is the migrant Indians who have an aversion towards their native language and they postpone learning it even if it becomes a requisite as part of their job as in the case of Piya. Language, more than a means of communication, is a platform to express emotions directly. In the case of English, once assimilated to the language of the colonised lands, it gets associated with power and hence loses the warmth associated with one’s native language. When Kanai hears Nilima speak in English to him other than the rural Bengali she uses to communicate with the locals, he feels “like listening to a lost language, the dialect of a vanished colonial upper middle class, spoken with the crisp enunciation once taught in elocution classes and debating societies” (131). Thus it is not just the invading societies that get afflicted by the invasion, but the invader also stands to lose. Language and education has often been a potent instrument in the hands of the subjugator to appropriate the invaded culture. Ironically, it has also been availed as an opportunity by the subjugated to empower themselves.

Balaram’s interest in science, though dampened by his teachers, is satiated by his extensive reading. His vision of Calcutta and Presidency College consisted of

scientists like Ronald Ross, Robert Koch, Jagadish Bose, Satyen Bose, Meghnad Saha and C V Raman. The strategy of his teachers to get him to study History instead of Science initially appears to have succeeded when he takes up a course in History. This is countered by Balaram by his tactic of reading more on Science, the lives of the scientists and the interesting stories behind many of the discoveries. This internal mechanism to ascertain survival tactics can be equated to human instincts gained by birth, which gets thwarted in many cases. The narrator in SL speaks of a "manipulative worldliness" (169) that women generally develop to deal with the challenges of a large joint family. He notices that his mother and other relatives, mostly those uninitiated into the shrewd world, have an instinctual impulse to secure tiny incentives for their immediate relations. Curiously, this is more pronounced in those who have less exposure.

Ghosh's tactical approach to general strategies while in Egypt is fundamental in this respect. Time and again, he is questioned and ridiculed for the customs of the people of his religion like cremating the dead, not undergoing circumcision, abstaining from eating beef etc. His response to these taunting comments is one that justifies the image in their minds, of him as a simpleton. His purposeful employment of such a tactic diminishes the gravity of their intrusion. This makes one of the characters in IAL, Bussaina, remark, "Everything's upside down in that country" (138), reminding one of the upside down ancestral home of *Tha'mma* in SL. While *Tha'mma* and her sister constructs this out of their imagination, Bussaina's is a more immediate concern as the practices in the author's country fall short of the ethical standards set by her cultural background. Ghosh introduces universal binaries of right and wrong to bring out their futility by contrasting each other – in *Tha'mma's* case as an unreal scenario as it is a fragment of forced imagination and in Busaina's case as

unrealistically real. That is, for Ghosh, Busaina's anxiety is grounded on unrealistic terms whereas from her viewpoint, evolved out of her nurturing, the fear is real. The process of fasting during Ramadan reiterates the unity of the community that she belongs to and this explains to the narrator the enormity of their confusion when confronted with his multicultural upbringing. Moreover, for the same reasons, he cannot be one with them in spite of all the friendly associations because, "to belong to that immense community was a privilege which they had to re-earn every year, and the effort made them doubly conscious of the value of its boundaries". (IAL 57)

The writer Saiyad Murad Husain in CC has to assume a pen name Phulboni "because his father threatened to disown him if he became a writer" (25). Thus his father's strategic threat fails to stop him from penning his thoughts and achieving success in the role of a writer, a vocation which has forfeited many promising literatis to carefully implemented strategies. The writer's tactic, of masking his identity yet exerting his right to expression, earns him fame. The literary tradition is carried forward by his illicit daughter Sonali, an actress, whose memoir is turned into a play, which is in turn made a movie that endows her with the celebrity status. Still, rather than clinging on to the sensuous world of cinema as many would have opted; she goes on to be in charge of the women's supplement of the newspaper, *Calcutta.* The father's tactics hence leads the way to the daughter's future too pointing towards the far-fetched implications of such measures.

Rajkumar's tactics in GP is of a different kind because he masters it even as a child. His dark, tall stature helps him to pass off as a person older than he is, to save himself from people taking advantage of his young age. When the locals are sad and tearful while witnessing the King's march to exile through the street, he is unaffected as he trusts and cares only for those who reciprocate the same. He joins the mob who

loots the palace once it is left unguarded after the British invasion and meets his future wife Dolly there for the first time. He tries to impress her with an ivory box found lying on the floor. The Queen's real position as far as the citizens are concerned is outlined through this episode:

> For the first time in her reign she had become what a sovereign should be, the proxy of her people. Everyone who came through the door fell to the floor in a spontaneous act of homage. Now, when she was powerless to chastise them, they were glad to offer her these tokens of respect; they were glad even to hear her rail at them. It was good that they should shiko and she berate them. Were she meekly to accept her defeat none would be so deeply shamed as they. It was as though they were entrusting her with the burden of their own inarticulate defiance. (34)

It is not just the common people, but also the servants in the palace who shift allegiance once the royal family is ousted from power and prepared for exile. None of them are willing to accompany the King to India except his family members. The orphaned girls, in charge of the Princesses, including Dolly also join the King as they have nowhere else to go. These people who desert the King are not wrong completely, because their relationship with the royal family has been one of hierarchy rather than out of consideration. Since they have been detached from the luxuries of being associated with royalty, they are not ready to bear its tribulation too. This incident marks the condition of the powerful once strategies fail. Ghosh starkly notes:

> All their lives they had been trained in the service of their master. But their training bound them to the King only so long as he embodied Burma and the sovereignty of the Burmese. They were neither the King's friends nor his confidents and it was not in their power to lighten the weight of his crown.

> The burdens of kingship were Thebaw's alone, solitude not the least among them….
>
> This is how power is eclipsed: in a moment of vivid realism, between the waning of one fantasy of governance and its replacement by the next….
>
> (41- 42)

The same people who had been faithful to the earlier regime and executed their commands, find themselves pleasing the new masters. This has been ingrained into the human mind irrespective of age so much so that when young Dolly offers the sweet that Rajkumar gave her to the soldier marching near her, though angry at first, Rajkumar appreciates her cleverness. The tactic suggested herein for future revolts is not one of violence but holds that it is "better by far to wait, and in the meanwhile to smile" (46). This "waiting" is critical because it is characterised by accruing strength and methods to strike. As an adult, when Saya warns Rajkumar against taking risks, he retaliates, "it is not just the big people who always know everything" (130). He proves himself correct by securing a contract through exploiting all the means at his disposal. Meanwhile, the oppressor would also devise strategies to weaken the oppressed as the case where the maids are informed of their free status resulting in no compulsion to fulfil the orders of the royal household members. The royal lineage is also strategically reminded intermittently of the bloodshed that the Queen caused in order to instil her husband as the King. When Uma confronts Dolly with this fact and queries how she could share a roof with such a person without fear, Dolly tactfully reminds Uma of the picture of Queen Victoria in Uma's house and states that she would have been frightened instead to live in such proximity to even a picture of a person as Queen Victoria in whose name millions of people lost their lives. The British deport the King to erase all the royal tokens that might lead the people to

rebellion, yet they are unsuccessful in achieving a complete erasure. Years later, on Jaya's visit to Ratnagiri, she is astounded by the sights that she sees around her:

> ... the town had somehow succeeded in keeping King Thebaw and his memory vibrantly alive. Thiba- Raja was omnipresent in Ratnagiri: his name was emblazoned on signs and billboards, on street corners, restaurants, hotels. The king had been dead more than eighty years, but in the bazaars people spoke of him as though they'd known him at first hand…. so richly loved in the land of his exile. (491)

General Aung San is another symbol identified by Ghosh in ALB, whose image runs parallel to King Thebaw, to intimidate the dictatorial Burmese government that took over after colonisation. The student unions, inspired by Aung San who entered into politics as a student leader, oppose dictatorship without getting dispirited from repeated setbacks. This results in the resignation of Gerneral Ne Win in 1988 and the entry of Suu Kyi into Burmese politics. The new regime, SLORC, places two options before her; either to leave the country forever or else to remain in house arrest. She chooses the latter and goes on to become a Nobel laureate for her selfless service to her countrymen. After the termination of her house arrest six years later in 1995, she convenes meetings in front of her house weekly to discuss social, literary and political issues as per public demand. During these sessions, while answering the queries, Ghosh is "startled by how much she laughed" (DICO 69). This is reciprocated by her audience too. In view of the discrimination she and the overall Burmese population are undergoing, such gestures of mirth and relaxation is conducive to rejuvenate. Ghosh summarises her tactics, "she had shown us that the apparently soft and unyielding world of books and words could sometimes forge a very fine kind of steel" (71). Through tactic, the same categorisation that situates one

as powerless can be dismantled so as to weaken the strategy behind its emergence and to open up a new space that can record true experiences without any bias, "In Post-colonial discourse, … we discover a space in which the concepts of strategy and tactic overlap – an ambivalent space…" (Ashcroft 54), which is neither for the strong nor for the weak.

Homi Bhabha too enunciates the scope of the ambivalent space against the binary opposition of the coloniser/colonised. To understand them better, not just the colonised needs to be studied but the colonisers' mentality and their insecurities that led to the suppression of people who would have posed threat to their superiority. Thus the oppressed are actually stronger because of which they are subjugated. This positive outlook would help to overcome the inferior feelings surrounding the subaltern identity. Once this realisation occurs to them, the next course of action should be to chalk out effective strategy to develop defiance enough to uproot inequitable representations that uphold an inconsequential segment inhabiting the planet, irrespective of the prerogative at their disposal. This signifies the necessity to be a consumer of the dominant policies so as to dare its mechanisms from within.

Ashcroft equates the American philosopher, Cornel West's phrase "critical organic catalyst" to the one who interpolates the mainstream, "a person who stays attuned to the best of what the mainstream has to offer— its paradigms, viewpoints and methods— yet maintains a grounding in affirming and enabling sub-cultures of criticism" (qtd. in Ashcroft 49). To act as such a catalyst is what is required of the deprived communities rather than persistent unproductive protests to contest their own status. These protests, at best, only seem to serve to highlight their dismal state which is again manipulated by the usurpers to reaffirm their supremacy. The binding factors are the result of the restrictive policy of the dominators to gradually extend it to a total

control. One has to be extremely alert to such stratagems to avoid being prey to its abiding influence before it gets into the realm of supreme command. In the earlier stages of limiting, it can be overcome with persistent efforts and in that sense dissent is not impossible even if it gets disregarded in many instances as stated herein, "[H]egemony is not impervious to resistance, it does not prevent individual action, nor does its confinement of individual choice negate the individual expression of resistance. The subaltern does not need to speak *out of* otherness to speak *as* the other." (46)

At this juncture, it is crucial to demarcate the difference between "Other" and "Otherness" as this can remove much of the uncertainties surrounding the formation of the Other as a diminutive compared to the acknowledged self. While resisting subjugation, assuming an oppositional stand would at the same time necessitate the risk of conceding to the rival's absoluteness and it can also have a debasing effect on one's individualism. "Other" as a categorisation, in this sense, is not essentially a matter of apprehension unless it projects the feeling of Otherness as something ingrained in one's identity. The focus should thus be on dissociating with the factors that create feelings of "Otherness" rather than contesting in the name of a meagre label that has in recent times, with the increase in theoretical reviews, acquired debilitating forms. While "Other" is only a kind of grouping, it is when one embraces "Otherness" by emphasizing only its negative qualities as habituated by the ruling ethos, that alterity turns out to be one of a deterrent variety altogether. The objective should be to fight as an Other surpassing the boundaries of Otherness inscribed through cultural appropriations.

Alu in COR is an apt example for this because when the sons of the founder of the school where Balaram teaches and Alu studies, harasses Alu to take revenge on

Balaram, Alu stoically overcomes the situation even to Balaram's surprise. Later as Balaram points out to Gopal, "It may be his bregma… He's so completely impassive. Nothing, nothing at all, seems to make an impression on him." (COR 27). Such sort of emotionless attitude often empowers the Other not just by concealing their attitude and the depth of the blow incidents produce in them, but also makes the opponent apprehensive about their further intention. Thus it actually facilitates an upper-hand for the victims, even though initially they appear to be thwarted. Alu is Othered, but his refusal to submit himself to such a feeling of Otherness exalts his position. Similarly Tridib in the SL is detested by the grandmother for wasting his time in loose-talk and for not utilizing his opportunities properly. She, being the representative of the critical society, counts one's success in relation to a bright career and prospects in future. In her view, Tridib lacks such an ambitious spirit and therefore is someone to be stayed away from. This Othering does not trouble Tridib at all because he is unaffected by societal pressures:

> Nobody was ever quite sure where they stood with Tridib; there was a casual self-mockery about many of the things he said which left his listeners uncertain about whether they ought to take what he said at face value or believe its opposite. As a result, inevitably, there were all kinds of conflicting rumours about him – especially because he was secretive about his family and his circumstances to an extraordinary degree – even more than was wholly warranted by the fact that everybody young was turning Maoist at that time. (SL 10)

When grandmother interprets his attitude as "idle self-indulgence" (6) instead of getting rebuffed, Tridib persists on his simpleton ways. This aggravates the position of the society embodied by the grandmother as this sort of non-conformism is

construed as a menace to its carefully constructed codes. The child narrator is shrewd to recognise that "she feared him" (7) and that by defaming him she is trying to curb his popularity and acceptability in the minds of other people. The narrator demonstrates a critical outlook, as imbibed from Tridib, right from the opening of the novel where he looks upon blood relationship as "something so arbitrary and unimportant" (3). This brings to the forefront the absurdity of compartmentalizing the Other on the basis of caste, colour, creed etc. which are not absolute groups but just tools to assign particular functions for the individuals to perform within its ambit. However, in the matter of love, he fails to persist on this analytical approach as he considers Nick, Ila's lover, as a rival with whom he has to compete for her attention. Thus his readiness to get Othered dampens his prospects in their relationship. The narrator's skill in precise imagination and sharp memory is not duly acknowledged by the other characters except for resigned astonishment on their part. Ila too requires another identity, that of a doll called Magda who has all the stereotypical features suggestive of beauty, in order to make herself desirable to Nick and to get away from her insecurities and confusion about her Indian identity in Britain.

'Eid in IAL is never subdued by repeated forms of Othering that he is subjected to, primarily, as he is from the Jammal community, the people of which are considered to be uncouth and quarrelsome, and also because he is uneducated. Ahmed Effendi, of the Badawy lineage which is one of the founding families of Nashawy, owns a majority of land in the village and makes the Jammals toil on it like his slaves with the support of the British. Yet, as Ghosh learns on his later visit to Egypt, 'Eid succeeds in fulfilling his dream of marrying the Badawy girl he loved after earning enough money from Iraq to lead a luxurious life. Similar to 'Eid's "voyage in" there are other people too who battle with adverse circumstances without losing hope. Ben

Yiju, who is one of the subjects of Ghosh's research and the reason for his presence in Egypt, originally hails from Tunisia and his clan migrated to Egypt where they joined a congregation. Their uniqueness is described by Ghosh thus:

> …unlike others of that time who have left their mark on history, the members of this community were not born to privilege and entitlement; they were neither aristocrats nor soldiers nor professional scholastics. The vast majority of them were traders, and while some of them were wealthy and successful, they were not, by any means, amongst the most powerful merchants of their time – most of them were small traders running small family businesses. (IAL 39)

These traders often have helpers who are called "slaves" but not in the present sense of the term. It refers, as denoted in the Middle Ages, to the primary stage of recruitment which led to apprenticeship; sometimes even partnership, and subsequently assimilated as members of the master's household. In most of the cases it serves as "fictive ties of kinship between people, who were otherwise unrelated" (213). This kind of bonding is not a forced one, but a "paradoxical embodiment of perfect freedom" (214). Ghosh points out the example of Sultan Mahmud Ghazni and his soldier-slave Ayaz to substantiate this further. The slave's devotion to his master often turns the master into his slave and the "the world-conquering Mahmud becomes 'the slave of his slave'" (215). Yiju's slave, Bomma, is also retrieved from oblivion through Ghosh's research. Ghosh reveres him because it is he who justifies Ghosh's presence in Egypt. Yiju belonging to the patriarchal Jewish community and Bomma from the matrilineal Tulunad, appear to be in contrast. Nevertheless, Ghosh redeems their history that brings them together. Bomma momentarily becomes powerful by

providing Ghosh a "sense of entitlement" (8). Even though only a few fragments of his identity are available, it is momentous because Ghosh reminds:

> …the reference comes to us from a moment in time when the only people for whom we can even begin to imagine properly human, individual, existences are the literate and the consequential, the wazirs and the sultans, the chroniclers, and the priests— the people who had the power to inscribe themselves physically upon time. But the slave of Khalaf's letter was not of that company: in his instance it was a mere accident that those barely discernible traces that ordinary people leave upon the world happen to have been preserved. (6)

Bomma accompanies Yiju upon his return to Egypt and it is from there that their story found its way to the Synagogue of Geniza where the letters ascribed with their identity were preserved until those letters were moved to the vaults of the libraries of Philadelphia, protected diligently by the precedents of the oppressors who disregarded them in their own lifetime. Along with Ben Yiju's slave, another character who attains a position in his family is his own wife-turned slave, Ashu, a Nair woman who bears him a son and a daughter. Yiju's trade partners do not seem to have accepted her into their midst like the slave, Bomma, as discernible from the letters addressed to Yiju by them in which they sent regards to Bomma but not to Ashu. Ghosh reflects, "This haunting effacement may in fact be proof that Ben Yiju did indeed marry Ashu, for only a marriage of that kind – with a slave girl, born outside the community of his faith – could have earned so pointed a silence on the part of his friends" (188). Contemplating on the cause for Yiju's own readiness to marry her, Ghosh concludes that it might be due to "another overriding and more important consideration" (188-89), but he resists the desire to give it the name of

"love" due to the absence of any proof to validate his suspicion. Thus the writer practices caution while representing events in history even if it is through a medium that permits deviation from factual accounts. This is also an aspect of his vocation that renders it credulity thereby sanctifying his mission of retrieving unique voices from the past that have resisted silencing strategies.

The contemplations around the term "slave" are further raised in GP. A Burmese student informs Arjun that when they see the Indian soldiers they remark, "there goes the army of slaves – marching off to catch some more slaves for their masters" (GP 288). Later on, weighing the British against the Japanese as invaders, Hardy tells Arjun, "think of where we've fallen when we start talking of good masters and bad masters. What are we? Dogs? Sheep? There are no good masters and bad masters, Arjun – in a way the better the master, the worse the condition of the slave, because it makes him forget what he is…" (438). This reinstates the need for each human being to analyse one's status with relation to others from time to time so as to prevent oneself from being oppressed or driven to the point of preferring domination as per Gramsci's nomenclature. On another instance, Arjun is confused about the way the workers use the term slavery to denote their lives. For them, it means their machine-like work where each minute thing is detailed to them by their supervisors who constantly police them. Rajan, the worker, elucidates this for Arjun, "even animals had the autonomy of their instincts" (522). Thus slavery is not just physical bondage but it has got relation with one's mental attributes too.

The most debated category, like slaves, that has been cited as deprived of speech is the insane. The contention is that they are treated as non-existent. They cannot protest against being forcefully medicated, which is endorsed by law. They thus become unqualified even to take decisions concerning themselves. Even though

this appears reasonable; there are also examples, right from the not so uncivilised past to the intellectually liberated present, where this is transformed to a weapon in order to silence one's enemies. This is most effectively represented in CC where Murugan ends up in an asylum due to his weird ideas. Ghosh utilises the abnormal status that the society thrusts on Murugan to channelise many seditious matters related to scientific discoveries. The forerunners of counter-science under the leadership of Mangala are also oppugned for refusing to conform to "normalcy". Through their revolutionary act, these characters emerge out of their suffering and attempt to activate inquisition against the linguist, Grigson's detesting remarks, "I've got you natives figured; I know exactly where every single one of you belong" (CC 81-82). The same authorities who assume a protective status also prove to be fallible when the time comes to act on behalf of the insane as apparent in GP. During the time of the war in Burma when order comes to a standstill, "The administration had opened the gates of the Rangoon lunatic asylum and the inmates were now wandering about trying to find food and shelter." (GP 467)

The "betrayal" of native identity through skin colour, features, speech etc has always invited rebuke and mistreatment for some people. Rajkumar, the Indian, is taken for granted as an orphan child in Burma. Therefore when he warns the Burmese population of the approaching British army on hearing the sound of their weapons, the people dismiss him by saying that he is "not an authority to be relied upon" (3). He is referred to as the *kalaa* even though his name meant "Prince" in Hindi. The term meaning "black" in Hindi is often used to refer to "foreigners" too as the Burmese King notes in his royal proclamation against the British, "those heretics, the barbarian English kalaas" (15). However, on Rajkumar, these insults fail to have an influence because his life experiences have made him stronger in physique and brighter in

intellect. When his potential employer Ma Cho gets angry with him for the troubles in her life quite unrelated to him, instead of getting dejected, he reasons, "this outburst… had more to do with the dust, the splattering oil and the price of vegetables than with his own presence or with anything he had said. He lowered his eyes and stood there stoically, kicking the dust until she was done" (5- 6). Sure enough, his tactful behaviour earns him a job and shelter in the foreign country. He exhibits a certain maturity and confidence coupled with determination right from his childhood. At first, he recuperates from a disease to which four of his family members succumb. Once in Burma, he carries out each of his plans without getting discouraged by what others say. Despite the numerous impediments in his way, he does succeed in accomplishing a few of his plans including his resolve to visit the royal palace, secure a timber contract and marry Dolly. His mentor Saya John plays a significant part in guarding this invincible spirit in him through setting an example because he is also an orphan like Rajkumar. He acknowledges his heredity thus:

> I was brought up by Catholic priests, in a town called Malacca. These men were from everywhere – Portugal, Macao, Goa. They gave me my name – John Martins, which was not what it has become. They used to call me João, but I changed this later to John. They spoke many many languages, those priests, and from the Goans I learnt a few Indian words. When I was old enough to work I went to Singapore, where I was for a while an orderly in a military hospital. The soldiers there were mainly Indians and they asked me this very question: how is it that you, who look Chinese and carry a Christian name, can speak our language? When I told them how this had come about, they would laugh and say, you are a *dhobi ka kutta* – a washerman's dog – na

> *ghar ka na ghat ka* – you don't belong anywhere, either by the water or on land, and I'd say, yes, that is exactly what I am. (10)

It is this lesson to take verbal attacks lightly and to overpower them with a laugh that Saya teaches Rajkumar which proves them to be stronger in willpower. This spirit of Saya is imbibed by his son Matthew who is parallel to Rajkumar in both self-confidence and in the belief that they will be successful in future. It is Matthew who informs Rajkumar that the British colonised Burma with a view to ravage the latter's teak plantations. Rajkumar cannot digest that there could even be a "war over wood" (15). He takes a cue from Matthew's words that wood is going to be in demand in the imminent years and decides to embark on a teak business. The Queen, on the other hand, cannot imagine a day when she will have to admit to her yet to be born child, if a boy, that he lost his kingdom on "a quarrel over some logs of wood" (22). She is unshakeable in her decision to not to concede to the British ultimatum. Determined to sustain her decision, even when in exile, she gets her daughter, a Princess, married to their coachman Sawant after she conceives from him. This is not just out of her retaliation to her jailers who left them in crude conditions but also due to Sawant's fond nature. When the Collector reminds her of Sawant's position in the society, she reprimands him severely by citing that compared to the former, Sawant is endowed with individuality as he recognises his status as a servant. On the other hand Dey, who is actually a servant to the British, poses like an officer. By being a "truthful" British servant helping his master to colonise his countrymen, he tries to Other her with the mention of "scandal" but the Queen retorts sharply. She defends her ancestors who were labelled as despots. She challenges the British sense of justice by demanding to know why there had been no trial after the King's house arrest. She

further justifies her stand against the British occupation of Burma by pointing out that the British would have also taken such a decision in a similar situation.

Similar to her, Saya is perturbed to think of Indian soldiers fighting for British just for the sake of money which would not have been the case with the Chinese. He calls them evil but looking into their eyes while away from the battle field, he could trace an innocence which makes him shudder because there is nothing more dangerous than "These men who would think nothing of setting fire to whole villages if their officers ordered, they too had a certain kind of innocence. An innocent evil. I could think of nothing more dangerous" (30). Their acceptance of Otherness can thus also prove detrimental for many people justifying the urgency with which such an attitude has to be discarded.

The plantation workers find themselves doubly marginalised, by the foreigners as well as the wealthy natives. When the war erupts, they join the Indian National Army which consists of trained soldiers like Arjun. At first these soldiers view the Tamil plantation workers with suspicion like their erstwhile master, the British, because the latter used to consider these workers as "racially unfit for soldiering". Once the time comes to prove their mettle, it is the plantation workers who are "much hardier and more dedicated than the professionals" (520). While many of the seasoned soldiers leave the Army to join the other side, workers like Rajan stick on to their struggle. Most of these people are descendants of Indians who settled outside India. Hence their knowledge of the motherland is formed only from the stories narrated by their forefathers. Ilongo overcomes his nickname "Morningside's village idiot" (235) and becomes a prominent figure in politics by taking part in the freedom struggles leading the labourers against colonisers like Britain and Japan. The same labourers who ignored him as a child thus learn to trust him "as one of their own" (323). He is

even bestowed a title, “Dato” once he becomes a minister in the Burmese government formed after its independence.

In HT, Piya recognises at first sight that though Fokir appears to be weak, there is “defiance in his stance at odds with the seeming defencelessness of his unclothed chest and his protruding bones” (HT 46). Moreover, it is from him that she gets “the first normal human contact” (47) after boarding the boat with an official guard and his team. On noticing her presence, he wears his sarong properly as a means of showing respect to her womanhood, which is what she requires the most in her line of work which affords less human contact and endless waiting. His experience in dealing with water and nature also proves substantial for her research. The knowledge he has gathered from years of observation and familiarity with the water and its creatures outweigh his limitation as an illiterate man unable to speak anything but his mother tongue. For instance, as Piya speculates, his capacity to foresee the movements of the unpredictable migrating Orcaella dolphins, defy ordinary logic. During their encounter, Piya notices that Kanai’s authoritativeness fails to prevail upon Fokir. When Kanai addresses him as though he were unwise, Fokir expresses his displeasure through silence. Kanai believes that he could easily influence and impress an illiterate like Fokir through his speech, but the latter’s deliberate silence proves more powerful and communicative than the former’s affluence.

Kanai is made to repay for this obstinacy later on, in a mangrove forest where Fokir tactfully brings him and gets him to face the fear of death which his people are subjected to on a daily basis. Yet the urbane world considers them as someone to be prevailed upon by virtue of their money power. On the forest land, Fokir addresses him as *tui* in a familiar tone and it dawns on Kanai that authority is not permanent but

something dependent on one's position, whether it is in a familiar locale or a strange one. This is the one place where the discourses of the human world are rendered inadequate to determine favourable positions. It is when faced with fear that men cease to be concerned with dominance and seek mutual support to face a common enemy. Here too, Kanai acts stubborn due to his ego and rejects Fokir's help with sharp retribution:

> His anger came welling up with an atavistic explosiveness, rising from sources whose very existence he would have denied: man's mistrust of the rustic; the city's antagonism to the village. He had thought that he had cleansed himself of these sediments of the past, but the violence with which they came spewing out of him now suggested that they had only been compacted into an explosive and highly volatile reserve. (326)

In contrast, faced with similar situations as part of his job in New Delhi, he had reacted calmly only considering them as "professional hazards". In the present circumstance, he is unable to presume such an attitude due to the ingrained notions of abomination towards the uneducated, poor and the racially subjugated. It is often forgotten that their position is a result of the injustices meted out to them by continuous deprivation. Moyna, Fokir's wife, acquires an education for herself and ensures that her son also gets a proper education as she realises its importance in the future to revive the situation of people like themselves. Kanai is amazed by her passion towards her job as a nurse and how she transforms to a "brisk professional… from the chrysalis of a careworn wife and mother" (132). Yet she also berates Fokir for his lack of education and ambition. When Piya offers him money to accompany her to the river pool, where dolphins gather, for research, Moyna is sceptical of Piya's justification in choosing him for his knowledge. She too disdains him and declares

that her "life would be a lot easier if her husband had a little more gyan and a little less gaan" (212). She is so well aware of the dangers in the natural habitat that she does not want their son Tutul to pursue the hereditary occupation as a boatman which involves tremendous risk and fewer prospects. Piya and Kanai debate about the relevance of wildlife preservation and how it proves perilous to the lives of poor settlers. When Kanai confronts her about the effect of such scale of human loss in a country like America instead of India, Piya retorts that no one has any right to intervene in the natural design. She adds:

> Just suppose we crossed that imaginary line that prevents us from deciding that no other species matters except ourselves. What'll be left then? Aren't we alone enough in the universe? And do you think it'll stop at that? Once we decide we can kill off other species, it'll be people next – exactly the kind of people you're thinking of, people who're poor and unnoticed. (301)

Nilima is another prominent figure who came to the tide country for getting out of the problems in her life. After absorbing vitality from its surroundings and being influenced by the pathetic situation of its people, especially women who are widowed at an earlier age, she discovers that her life's mission lies in striving for their betterment. At seventy-six, this is what keeps her strong even after the death of Nirmal. She wields so much respect that she is often surrounded by both powerful and powerless people who hope to enlist her support. They maintain diligence while dealing with her because everyone would agree:

> Nilima's customary manner was one of abstracted indulgence. Yet when the occasion demanded she was also capable of commanding prompt and unquestioning obedience – few would willingly cross her, for it was well known that Mashima, like many another figure of maternal nurture, could be

> just as inventive in visiting retribution as she was in dispensing her benedictions. (22)

An image associated with the "freshly laid silt" in the river is vividly evocative of the task of the voiceless. A few bubbles rise from its depth and burst as they reach the top "as if to suggest they were giving voice to the depths of the earth itself." Ghosh refers to this as "articulate patterns" (24) which highlight how nature too gets represented in some way. In this endless battle for authority, there are some Englishmen who are denied the space for articulation either because their ideas contradict imperialistic goals or at least cause hindrance to their implementation. Mr Piddington, an English shipping inspector, who has done intensive research on cyclones out of interest, warns the officials regarding the dangers inherent in the place chosen for the port by Lord Canning. In spite of being the inventor of the term "cyclone", his warnings are ignored as "he stood very low in the Ingrej scale of caste" (286). As a revolt against this aversion to everything minor, the cyclone is caused not by a storm but by a surging wave, a pointer towards the perils of suppressing those ideas and people who do not qualify one's criteria. This crusade for adequate representation requires the participation of all the voices that have been denied articulation in various fields like the economical, social, intellectual etc. Sometimes subalternisation extends beyond money, class and gender to academicians, as in the case of subalternised scientists and writers; proving that even intellectuals fail to find a place in the order of things determined by particular agencies. Even a country as a whole loses its speech when these vital groups are denied the freedom to carry out their function undaunted or when they are pressurised to think in narrow terms. This has been the case with Burma which, as Ghosh recollects in ALB, "had become a kind of lost world in the early '60s". (DICO 57)

In GP, Dinu's wife Daw Thin Thin Aye is a writer but the autocratic regime that took over the country after the foreign invasion is too careful to avoid any mutiny. They set up the Press Scrutiny Board through which all the written materials have to pass before publishing. They are aware of the power of words to incite people and their dormant feelings of individuality after continuous suppression. She is therefore denied the right to express through literature, which she tries to avenge by supplying matter for a pamphlet and attending meetings presided over by people like Aung San Suu Kyi who are working towards restoring democracy in the country. Dinu explains to Jaya how Suu Kyi has dealt with the autocrats, "She has robbed them of words, of discourse…. The truth is that they've lost and they know this… this is what makes them so desperate… the knowledge that soon they will have nowhere to hide… that it is just a matter of time before they are made to answer for all that they have done". (DICO 543)

The people who are caught between this torturous past and an uncertain future are the ones in a precarious position. This also includes those from "urban middle classes" (8) like Molyka in DIC. They are the representatives of those subalterns who are gradually denied existence and hence struggle psychologically to withstand coercion. She is separated from her family for three years and sent to a labour camp at the age of thirteen. Many of her family members are killed and the rest are left traumatized leaving her with no other option but to join the army to support her family. This capacitates her to not only provide education for her own brothers and improve their conditions, but also equips her with munificence to adopt a child and to support almost "half a dozen complete strangers" (9). Yet her ordeal is not over with the approaching elections because the surging desperation in people, for fear of the unstable future that awaits them, leads to assault and theft in the streets. Especially,

the militants go wild foreseeing the end of the terror that they had secured till now by keeping their inhuman actions secret from the outside world. Ghosh, at first hand, investigates the circumstances before and after their ordeal and notices a "muted exhilaration" (15) mostly in the voices of women like Molyka and CheaSamy when they speak about this period. "Out of the ruins around them they began to create the means of denying Pol Pot his victory", observes Ghosh.

King Norodom, Sisowath's precedent, can be regarded as one ruler who could have set a model for the Cambodians in launching resistance. Ghosh describes him as "an immensely attractive as well as recognisable figure within the annals of colonialism: the doughty chieftain who defends his tiny corner of the world with courage and resourcefulness against overwhelming odds" (16). Sisowath, in comparison, acts as a puppet in the hands of the French. Still, his permission to set up a "French-run school for Cambodians" (17) in the palace premises, proves instrumental in the future toppling of colonialism. Once the foreigners are ridden out of the land, the "educated" civilians carry forward the legacy and it is the "Vietnamese minority" (22) that turns out to be the initial victim during the Khmer regime in order to avenge the Vietnamese's invasion. The Cambodians prove themselves to be resilient with their strong artistic lineage that sustains them during the continuous hardships and even without much financial aid from organisations, manage to endure without losing hope. People like Sros whom Ghosh meets on his way to find Pol Pot's village, have spent much of their life in camps where the living conditions are no better. Fortunately for Sros, his family joins a camp run by UN where he attends school and learns English. This helps him to earn a job after he decides to get back to Cambodia. The idealists like Khieu Samphan fail to reverse the country's fate despite being disinclined to personal afflictions like those of his

family's including his mother and friends' who also suffer terribly or are put to torture along with the general public while the country is under his rule.

Burma's case as detailed in ALB is no different from its neighbouring territory. Under the dictator General Ne Win who took charge in 1962, Burma's policies towards migrants were made strict and the nationals were also kept under constant watch to prevent coup. Following General Aung San's assassination in 1947, it had become inevitable for the authorities to be on vigil against the onset of such attacks. Moreover the British have made the administration tougher with strategies to intensify jurisdiction leaving the succeeding government to deal with the repercussions arising thereof. Outlining the colonial history of the country, Ghosh observes:

> The British had adopted a scorched-earth policy when they withdrew from Burma in 1942, demolishing bridges, setting fire to oil fields, and blocking the Irrawaddy's navigation channels with scuttled ships. Three years later, the retreating Japanese had reciprocated, destroying all that was left of Burma's infrastructure…. By the end of the war, after two bitterly fought campaigns, Burma was a devastated country. (59)

The question, "who or what determines agency?" has acquired immense significance in the contemporary scenario where the decision making power is often shifted from one hub to the other. The crux of such agencies is the spy networks that afford them surveillance mechanisms in order to have a check on the citizens. Jeevanbhai Patel in COR and Antar in CC represent those who are a prey to this kind of invading strategy adopted by the technologically superior lot. Antar works from home for the International Water Council using a system named AVA/IIe which is as

self-sufficient as a human being. Gendered as a female, she has a “laser guided surveillance camera” which functions as her eyes and a screen to project images. She is programmed to be multi-talented and her speech can be set to any language, right to the specific dialect with apt intonations, in the gender and age of one’s choice. It can also project images in different dimensions onto a wall and virtually take Antar to any part of the world without any restrictions. With humanly impossible precision and ultimate knowledge to “spit out” answers with proofs to all the queries, she stands to mimic and satirise the Occidental images of “perfection”. To make this act poignant, she is at times endowed with emotions depicted through her moving “eyes”. Analysing the necessity of such a machine for his employers, Antar concludes, “Instead of having an historian sift through their dirt, looking for meanings, they wanted to do it themselves: they wanted to load their dirt with their own meanings” (CC 6). Antar’s job is to monitor Ava while she is engaged in updating the inventories of the Council spread throughout the world and to alert them towards discrepancies. He becomes a part of this organisation after LifeWatch – a “global public health consultancy and epidemiological data bank” (8) that he had been working for – got absorbed into the Council. The strategy of breaking the rival economies by controlling their means of livelihood is the latest weapon of the global world. The tragedy outlined here is man’s journey towards a world where technology will be preferred as an oppressor rather than losing that position to another human being.

Under such a system, the element of secrecy is often absent as everyone is under some kind of observation without their knowledge. Like Antar, the scientist Ronald Ross, the colonial representative, is also kept under watch. In ALB, Ghosh traces the working and scope of such surveillance system in real-life scenarios like the

less resourceful Burmese society where, “its successive military regimes have succeeded in creating systems of surveillance that are unsurpassed in the scope of their intrusiveness” (DICO 68).The secret knowledge that offers a feeling of dominance for some over the others, is ironically a mirage as it is built on false hopes of security. Each link in the chain of information transfer thrives on selfish motives yet fails to comprehend the futility of their deceitful act. Ultimately the end user of the information too is not free from its self-destructive nature as mostly the information acquired through such channels proves to be biased. In COR, the police attack the procession to the Ras to retrieve Alu’s sewing machine mistaking it for some exhibition of their strength and a direct challenge to their authority, leading to the death of many innocent people. Patel, the informer, commits suicide once he realises his mistake and understands the stark reality of the world that he occupies which is so complicated that any claim of wild justice through consistent struggles is dismissed. Das, on the other hand, has to suffer rebuke and punishment from his senior officers for being unsuccessful in imparting his duty. He is just a tool to exert agency and his fate is no different from that of the targeted faction once the initial purpose is served.

This agency has been upheld as part of colonisation throughout the world. Kinwun Mingyi, a senior minister, warns the Queen in GP, “the British might allow the Royal Family to remain in the palace in Mandalay, on terms similar to those of the Indian princes – like farmyard pigs… to be fed and fattened by their masters; swine, housed in sties that had been tricked out with a few little bits of finery” (22). It is not only humans who fall prey to these agencies, but also animals like elephants as identified in the novel. With the advent of Europeans; the elephants, which were otherwise used only for wars and ceremonies, were made “to work for human profit” (74). Ghosh relates a scenario where a British officer has to suffer a terrible death

because of an elephant that lost its handler due to the obstinacy of the officer. Saya who witnesses this incident is frightened to discover that the elephant which had been bound securely to a tree is supposedly released by a human being, suggestively the dead handler. This encounter with the supernatural brings two of the points broached by the West against East – at one level, that of dismissing its beliefs as superstitions and on another, the depth of human-animal bond that goes beyond the concerns of power and subjugation.

On the other hand, the impulsive act on the part of the authorities also exposes their feelings of insecurity and ineffectiveness serving to destabilise their control. The burden of dealing with the ensuing chaos also lies on them and it leads to increasing discontentment in the public towards those in power resulting in their downfall. By creating categories like “suspect” “extremist” etc., and assigning people to each of such groups, those in power construct opponents so as to corroborate their subduing acts. These acts are often very intricate and involve representatives from among the affected in order to ensure successful implementation. In COR when Patel is entrusted with the task of getting Das to see Alu, he, in turn, seeks Zindi’s help to fulfil it without leaving any scope for doubt. Her initial refusal is effectively countered by Patel by tempting her with the proposal to sell his shop to her, on which she had pinned her hopes for the future. It is the desire for the inaccessible that principally leads to the characters’ ruin at the hands of the opportunists who thereby gain an upper-hand through deception because ultimately the promises turn out to be false. Money is another means through which power is exercised over others. Zindi laments its absence owing to Alu’s dictum that paper money should be banned as it is the chief cause for the spread of “germs”. It can also be treated as a significant step in terms of the tactic adopted to defend suppression in the name of poverty and also to discourage

dividing strategies by appealing to one's greed. All power models have emerged out of these schemes of division that epitomises one side at the cost of the other.

The essay DIC begins with the description of such a demarcation between the exotic and the customary. King Sisowath of Cambodia and his dancers are brought to France in the pretext of a tour as part of showcasing France's "colonial possessions" (DICO 1). For the French, this is an occasion to accustom and entertain themselves with the peculiarities of other cultures. The dancers' artistic merits and religious worth which they treasure do not appeal to the coloniser. Their voyeuristic function is broadened by the detailed sketching of their appearance and the kind of attention that they draw from the foreign crowd. The reporters visit "the King and his court in what was to be their natural habitat for the next week" (18). This satiric spectacle highlights the meaninglessness of outward pomp and honour. They are mocked to the point of treating their ignorance of progressive features as "those little instances of misrecognition and misunderstanding that so often enlivened encounters with foreigners" (19). These representations are often biased as Ghosh draws through the example of Egypt and Europe in IAL:

> Only Europe has always insisted on knowing the country not on its own terms, but as a dark mirror for itself. 'Egyptian darkness,' says the Oxford English Dictionary, quoting the Bible, 'intense darkness….' Or Egyptian days: the two days in each month which were believed to be unlucky'; and 'Egyptian bondage: bondage like that of the Israelites in Egypt.'(19)

By constructing an identity for a country through its name and thereby devising ways to subjugate its people, the dominator often displays its own imperfection. In the case of many nations like Egypt, repeated invasions alter its

geography drastically. The country's capital shifts from Alexandria founded by Alexander, to Fustat alias Babylon with the conquest of 'Amir ibn al- 'As. Yet another conquest by Fatimids led by Jawhar al- Rumi situates the capital in a new township named as al- Qahira after the planet Mars which, in European tongue, becomes Cairo. After violent plundering by the European empires such as Napolean's in 1798, it is the turn of the Western scholarly interventions to strip the country of its ancient roots too. It is thus the Synagogue of Ben Ezra in Babylon first attracts the attention of a Jewish traveller, Simon Van Geldern, in 1752-53. Later, during the rule of the British regime in 1864, a scholar Jacob Saphir visits the place without any avail and notes down in his memoir, published in 1866, "But who knows what is still beneath" (63). It is Abraham Firkowitch who sorted the manuscripts in the Synagogues spread across Egypt, and sent it to St. Petersburg's State Public Library earning it the "title" of the largest collection of Biblical manuscripts in the world. Commenting on Firkowitch's negligence of the exact sources of his discovery, Ghosh deciphers:

> If there is any irony today… that a Jewish collector… would have seen reason to steal manuscripts from his fellow Jews in Palestine in order to take them to Russia…he was merely practising on his co-religionists the methods that Western scholarship used, as a normal part of its functioning, throughout the colonized world. (63-64)

Another method devised by the coloniser to tackle its subjects, is to extol one particular community's native identity in comparison to others belonging to a land. It is thus in 1888 that Elkan Adler, a Jewish Briton, came in contact with the Cattaouis, a highly influential Jewish community in Cairo. Upon arrival at Cairo, the Cattaouis rose in power radically compared to the indigenous Jews who had direct relationship

with the Synagogue. In recognition of their assistance to secure the British grip on Egypt, they were rewarded with various titles, strategic positions and a portrait of Queen Victoria, which they seemed to treasure. Ghosh's satiric account of this incident demarcates the pathetic alternatives that the natives resorted to, due to avarice impelled by the British. They even organise a feast for the benefit of the coloniser as a token of "gratitude." Incongruously, the British regard their gesture only as a sort of distraction and term it as an "aboriginal feast." (65)

Meanwhile, the real expedition is underway in the form of transfer of the Geniza documents to libraries outside Egypt by bribing the officials. Another scholar Dr Solomon Schechter, who initially disregards these documents as "Egyptian fragments" (66), is convinced of its worth as it is *The Book of Wisdom* in original Hebrew, through the intervention of two other scholars Agnes Lewis and Margaret Gibson. In 1896 this discovery is made public without acknowledging the origin of the documents as a Middle Eastern country because Schechter planned to visit Egypt in search of further such relics and appropriate that too in his name. This mission is justified in two respects; firstly, "by the light of Western knowledge and experience… we conscientiously think is best for the subject race" (69) and secondly, "the custodians of the Synagogue of Ben Ezra had no idea of the real value of the Geniza documents – a species of argument that was widely used in the nineteenth century to justify the acquisition of historical artefacts by colonial powers" (70). When the local people demand money from Schechter while he is himself engaged in such a scale of ravage at Egypt, he expresses his contempt for them. Ghosh scorns this "view of the world in which the interests of the powerful defined necessity, while the demands of the poor appeared as greed". (71)

A corresponding scenario occurs in HT through the demeanour of Kanai who represents the modern man. Kanai considers himself to be above reproach and often acts in an influential manner afforded by the sense of assurance developed from this attitude. This is evident from the way, while on a train, he manipulates a man sitting in the window seat to exchange seat with him through persuasion and an air of superiority emanating from his branded clothes and rich appearance. Piya's portrayal of his mind, reminiscent of the Postcolonial progressive minded intellects, is very vivid:

> … a looking-glass in which a man like Fokir could never be anything other than a figure glimpsed through a rear-view mirror, a rapidly diminishing presence, a ghost from the perpetual past that was Lusibari. But she guessed also that despite its newness and energy, the country Kanai inhabited was full of these ghosts, these unseen presences whose murmurings could never quite be silenced no matter how loud you spoke. (220)

This patronizing attitude, in the postcolonial setting, is even adopted by nature. As with most of the coastal lands, some of the islands disappear and some others appear afresh as a result of the floods. Islands are described as "the rivers' restitution, the offerings through which they return to the earth what they have taken from it, but in such a form as to assert their permanent dominion over their gift" (7). This could be equated to the strategy of the coloniser who, post colonialism, has returned the land as a physical entity to the natives; yet, through neo-globalisation and technological warfare, still attempt to colonise their mental landscape with renewed force.

The manner of colonisation, with its frequent shifts in the centre can be vividly discerned by the metaphor of the river that first engulfs the islands on the periphery

and then the forests. The rivers, as with the colonisers, may have different seductive names like the *mohona*, which denotes the confluence of many channels of water, both big and small. They are initially presented as fresh waters, a requisite for survival but as they advance their clutch into the interior landscape they merge with the salty sea water. Their impact on the forest is similar to that of the islands, submerging them and making it imperative for the forests to fight back for existence. The new lands that emerge are soon taken over by the mangroves that preserve the secretive subsistence of the subaltern. Their tactics are rather straight forward that suffice to avenge as the writer warns, "At no moment can human beings have any doubt of the terrain's utter hostility to their presence, of its cunning and resourcefulness, of its determination to destroy or expel them. Every year dozens of people perish in the embrace of that dense foliage, killed by tigers, snakes and crocodiles" (8). Amidst these predators, the world of the marine mammals is often overlooked and it is in this context that Piya's research on them becomes momentous as it helps to protect them from extinction. Mangroves are the primary point of reference for the tidal forest followed by its predators. Piya revamps the role of the crabs, "a sanitation department and a janitorial team rolled into one" in sustaining the mangroves, the animals that depend on its dense foliage to prey and maintain the balance of the ecosystem. Being substantial in population compared to the others, they could be regarded as "the keystone species of the entire coastal ecosystem" (142). In addition, it is the crab – Fokir's livelihood that leads him to the pool of the Oracella dolphins – which in turn proves beneficial for Piya.

Just like the animal world, the methods to safeguard the human world is also underway which is initiated by Nirmal's participation in a conference at a time when the activities of many countries were being watched by the West in the post war

scenario, leading to his police detainment. He is mentally disturbed after this incident and leaves his job as a lecturer in the college. Later, Nilima's family patch up after the initial friction owing to their love marriage and her father arranges a job for him as a school teacher in Lusibari. Their arrival coincides with the annual birthday celebration of the island's founder, Sir Daniel. They witness selfless human relations beyond race and culture as the villagers garland his statue and they realise that for them he is though "not quite a deity… certainly a venerated ancestral spirit". Ghosh, as a writer, is also sensitive towards the existence of genuine people among the colonisers but for whom, the dream of independence would not have been fulfilled for the colonised. This stresses the necessity of a mutual interdependence between people, a rhizomic one, rather than one that competes for supremacy which can be debilitating for both. This realisation dawns on Nirmal and Nilima and "It shamed them to think that this man – a foreigner, a Burra Sahib, a rich capitalist – had taken it upon himself to address the issue of rural poverty when they themselves, despite all their radical talk had scarcely any knowledge of life outside the city". (78)

The goodwill resulting out of the just act of one person is overshadowed by the egocentric exploits of others who, instead of promulgating this model for the other parts of the country to follow, eclipse it through all possible means. This emanates from their fear that once the barriers of caste and language are dissipated, they will lose control over the Indian Territory. This exposes the agenda behind colonisation, that it is not one of egalitarian origin but that of financial motives to establish racial superiority. Nirmal and Nilima comprehend this tragic state of affairs soon after reaching there. They are stupefied to note that not much is known about the existence of such islands in their part of the country despite the proximity of the place. The positive aspect of the islands that most appeal to them is that unlike the outwardly

progressive yet inwardly conformist agenda of their region, the people in these islands do not possess multiple identities.

In spite of the egalitarian atmosphere that the land promises, the settlers have a difficult subsistence as they were mostly from farming communities and the soil of the tide country with its salt content is not cultivable. The greed of the interlopers follows them there, through managers and the like who misappropriate the funds allocated for the estate and subdue the farmers who resist. The author reports that the subjugator's "methods were those of a penal colony and the atmosphere that of a prison camp" (80). Most of the government compensation for those who die of natural causes, do not reach them due to lack of permits and papers to raise claims. The absurdity of red tape in a situation as deplorable as theirs is highlighted here. One factor that resuscitates their state is the position of the widows, who were innumerable, in that community. Most of them get married at an early age and lose their husbands soon enough to floods, animals etc. As Nilima gathers, "here, on the margins of the Hindu world, widows were not condemned to lifelong bereavement: they were free to remarry if they could" (81). To endow them with more options, she starts a Union for them, which finally culminates in the Badabon Trust. The name badabon is taken from Arabic *badiya*, meaning "desert" and Bangla *bon*, "forest". The word itself being an island born out of joining two languages, is considered apt by Nirmal who names the Trust functioning in a country "begotten of the Ganga's union with the Brahmaputra" (82). Except the naming part, Nirmal refuses to extend support to Nilima's "social work", the term he uses with contempt to dismiss "her life's work" (120). Thus these tactics work towards exposing the methods of achieving supremacy and securing central position in ways inconceivable by the strategy makers. Spivak, as

analysed by Morton, in her study on Mahasweta Devi espouses deconstruction to collapse the centrality of agencies that flourish by impelling many to the periphery:

> By employing the critical tools of deconstruction, however, Spivak resists the temptation to represent the fictional subaltern characters in Mahasweta Devi's writing as transparent objects of knowledge for western-trained intellectuals. Instead, Spivak traces the linguistic and rhetorical nuances in Devi's texts where tribal, subaltern women characters like Jashoda, Draupdi or Douloti articulate an embodied knowledge that cannot be accounted for in the dominant terms of western knowledge and representation. (134)

In this context, resistances that represent a different reality by countering customary versions become very relevant. The western reliance on binary models of defining events is shattered by the indigenous societies thereby dissolving the distinction between history/memory, fact/folklore, science/pseudo science etc. Ghosh's experimentation in narrative structure, language and mixing of genre can be interpreted as a challenge to the prevalent discourse that prioritises power politics, that thrive on rules at the expense of cultural roots, to basic human sentiments. The title of the novel *The Circle of Reason* itself points towards the endless, often crisscrossed, entities in the world that enumerate the futility of any attempt to exalt one or trivialise the other. The "reason", held up by Balaram and his counterparts, is rejected as it does not appear as scientific to many others. Thus he chooses a profession that does not allow division of reason as the one ideal for his nephew, that of a weaver because "The loom recognises no continents and no countries. It has tied the world together with its bloody ironies from the beginning of human time" (COR 59). Shombhu Debnath, Alu's teacher, has little faith on his skills yet Balaram's prediction that he would be a master weaver based on the Organ bulging out of his

skull proves right from the way Alu learns the art despite constant degradation faced from all sides.

Zindi's art of storytelling is another example for the subaltern meaning making process which could be quite radical when compared to the one disseminated through popular means. She finds a counterpart in Zaghloul in IAL, who "had a manner of telling them that was marvellously faithful to the metaphorical resonances of his chosen craft" (109). Ghosh projects this as a craft and as not something demeaning or futile. Zindi too gives a new angle to the stories each time she narrates, "… when sometimes she chose a different word or a new phrase it was like the pressure of a potter's thumb on clay – changing the thing itself and their knowledge of it" (229). She proves that generating interest through novelty is not just the prerogative of some but an ability that could be developed by others too. The defamiliarising techniques adopted by her point towards the inevitable function served by dominant tools even in the hands of the oppressed dissolving the contrary claims made by the dominator. In the process it is revealed that it is not actually the credulity of such stories that alerts the centre against it, but their power to incite people that could pose a threat to its basic foundation built on fake concepts that mostly involve demeaning other societies and their practices. After the building, Star, collapses and Alu goes missing, stories about him being alive, accounts of a ghost escaping with a treasure etc. spread like wild fire. When Rakesh expresses his hunch that Alu might be alive among the wreckage, Zindi dismisses it as his imagination. Later on, it turns out to be a fact and not just mere speculation directed to shatter the scepticism about stories as a mere "construct".

The religious belief behind the land where the Star was being constructed while presented as a superstition is narrated by Hajj Fahmy in a manner that evokes

genuineness beyond any suspicion. Even though Abu Fahl questions its veracity by demanding, “If it’s true, how’s it a story?” (264), Hajj Fahmy remains unaffected because he realises that truth can never be contained for long in the disguise of a story. Sometimes as hinted in the case of Nury, the egg-seller, one can create stories about oneself to gain sympathy and acceptability. Ross in CC keeps a diary to let the future world know of his experiments, covering around five hundred days, through his own stories of them to prevent interpretations apart from what he has intended. Being a writer of novels and poems, he is so conscious of the far-fetched reach of words that he wants his account to be “the official story**”**. The “eccentric” Murugan refusing to trust only his version of the story, chides in his typical style, “young Ronnie, the lone genius, streaks across the field and runs away with the World Cup” (CC 51). This accomplishment, in a period of three years of serious research, while other countries have been involved in the same for many years, is unacceptable to him. Upon further probing, Murugan recounts to Antar his version, which he initially spurns but is forced to accept later on. Clubbed with the writer Phulboni’s *The Laakhan Stories*, his stories begin to make sense.

Many of the stories reach the border points like the coastal areas before the mainland and there have been occasions where the negligence of them has led to severe repercussions. In GP, it is the blind faith of the Queen of Burma, Supayalat, that lead her to trust ministers who were traitors rather than be warned by the brewing stories that lead to the ultimate colonisation and exile of the royal family. Nirmal, the story teller in HT, recounts to the five-year-old Fokir stories from the tide country’s “library”, the *bãdh*. When their storytelling session embarks on serious topics like politics, Nirmal quickly affirms, “storytellers know that discretion is sometimes a wiser course than valour” (202). Thus he commemorates the responsibility of people

who keep the past alive through stories. The *bãdh* is a kind of wall that separates land from water. It acts as a monument for the storms in the past and also those yet to come. The book that he leaves for his nephew Kanai, is to be a meta-story in the latter's hand who plans to make that a subject for his own story and thus give life to his uncle's unfulfilled yearnings. Kanai can, in this sense, be deemed as Ghosh's counterpart because as Ghosh recounts in the beginning of the essay ALB, he grew up "on stories of other countries" (DICO 57) which have shaped him as a writer. In SL too the grandmother and her sister Mayadebi make up stories about the life on the other side of the wall after their ancestral house gets partitioned among the two brothers. They imagine that everything that happens on the other side is quite contrary to the normal routine of people like "their books go backwards and end at the beginning" (SL 124) etc. These "upside down" tales were not just a source of fun in their childhood but made them yearn to be on the other side when their parents scolded them. Thus, these stories act as a means of escape at times of sorrow which seemed almost real to them with repeated mention. It is essential, therefore, to differentiate between the different kinds of stories and to accept the credible ones as significant in considering the history of a society.

The regime controlling a society requires a strong base that needs to be continually ascertained with regard to its potency. Any form of dissent, even to an infinitesimal degree, can destabilise its foundation. In COR, when the shopping mall under construction topples, Hajj Fahmy remarks, "a house which nobody wants cannot stand" (284). This is an indicator towards the state of a system that is unsympathetic to its own members. Hence it suggests a hopeful shift in the direction of counter-revolutions that can deracinate unsolicited enterprises. Another remarkable outcome of the fall is that Alu, the protagonist, is reborn with revived vigour that

would have made his uncle Balaram proud if he were alive and the latter's predictions about the former based on phrenology are proved correct. Alu's momentous survival after being stuck under the debris for four days without food and water is quite symbolic of the subaltern resilience and its aftermath is suggestive of the predicament of the oppressive establishment world-over. Those uprisings that have been subdued are not necessarily failures because they have cautioned the future generations against the mistakes to be avoided as Hem Narain Mathur, the genuine socialist, advices his daughter Uma, "make my failures the beginning of your hopes" (408) and as Professor Samuel remarks, "This is not the end, only the beginning…. The queue of hopes stretches long past infinity". (442)

Silence is as real as a character in Ghosh's works. The repeated use of the word coupled with resistive measures aggravates the tension between conflicting groups in a lucid manner. The expressions like "uncommunicative silence" (191) referring to the ship *Mariamma* taking the immigrants abroad, Alu "savouring the silence" (202) and his "wide-eyed silence" (30), Abusa's silent frown and the egg seller Nury who knew everything through his silent transactions, Hajj Fahmy's "long silence" (284), "grim silence" (321), "angry silence" (176), "fearful silence" (90), "awestruck silence" (102), "tired silence (309), "shocked silence" (110), "fog of silence" (215), "thoughtful silence" (264); all contribute towards the final resistive tactics devised by the muted. Ghosh proves that "Truth lies in silences" (284) and hence silences are to be treated not as a sign of weakness but as a powerful tool against half constructed realities that are to be unmasked. The "bowl of silence" (341) envisages menace to the captives – the labour contractors, Adil and his cousin, "Trapped in that storm of silence, they circled slowly back to the centre, looking around the courtyard like caged foxes. Slowly as they began to understand the depths

of their humiliation, the disbelief and mockery on their faces faded into terror. Weighed down by the silence they sank to their knees." The "silence beginning to stir" (301) evokes more of a threat to the centre than the absence of silence in the first place because it has the strength to demolish the carefully worked out strategies deployed against it as seen in the above context. Silence can sometimes be self-destructive as well. For example, while addressing the gathering in the Ras about the scientist Pasteur's failure, Alu questions, "Which is the battleground which travels on every man and every woman, *silently* (emphasis added) preparing them for their defeat, turning one against the other, helping them destroy themselves?" (302). In SL, the narrator clarifies the relationship between silence and meanings thus, "I know nothing of this silence except that it lies outside the reach of my intelligence, beyond words – that is why this silence must win, must inevitably defeat me, because it is not a presence at all; it is simply a gap, a hole, an emptiness in which there are no words" (218). Contrary to the narrator, Antar in CC is more comfortable with "companionable silence" (12) that perpetuates an existence without pressures nor neglect.

The discourse mechanism that determines the content and means of data production and dissemination thrives, as Foucault observes, on certain internal and external procedures of exclusion as hinted earlier in the second chapter. When the external procedures are imbibed generally by everyone, the internal ones are targeted at aspects that contribute towards the formation of individual thought-processes. This includes components that can have direct influence on literature like the initiation of elements such as literary criticism, author, disciplines and the speaking subject as noted in Mills. The critics tend to keep the text in circulation and profess to have completely understood a text and consider it their right to interpret it for the readers.

The author is a pretext to gather otherwise different and intricate works under a unit so as to force an order onto them. Education too determines who can speak what and when, right from the arrangement of the classroom atmosphere to the point where discourses come into being. Mills asserts Foucault's stance that disciplines limit the subject area into certain closed circles that restrict its widening possibilities as the following academician reflects:

> For Srinivas, post-independence India's most illustrious sociologist, the term 'anthropology' itself suggested collusion with the project of British imperialism, when the discipline was used as an instrument of colonial policy to keep sections of the population away from the national mainstream…. Tribal and caste groups were studied not for the purpose of documenting the cultures of dying or fast changing societies, but rather to study the process of change itself. (Chatterji 92)

Ghosh travels deep into the seams of the investigating societies to comprehend their real ethos before depicting them in fictionalised form. As a result, far from an approach undertaken by a researcher on a mission to complement one's study, his considerate methodology draws characters, situations and environment in their ideal dispositions and thereby minimises any scope for condemnation. This is apparent from his dealings with the cultures of diverse places like Calcutta, England, Egypt, Cambodia, Burma, Sundarbans etc. as part of his literary ventures. Ghosh has evolved as a responsible writer through the numerous enlightening encounters as part of his vocation which is obvious from the socially relevant themes and issues undertaken by him throughout his literary career. These comprise of not just buried instances of contemporary relevance from the past, dug out with a sensitive precision lacked by some historians, but also current topics that can have grave impact on the future of

mankind. His narrative technique that mixes genres is reminiscent of Said's "worldliness – material context of the texts and the critic" and a process he calls "voyage in". In the course of choosing to write through a widespread medium and in an unconventional fashion, Ghosh transcends the criticism of Gramsci's "domination by consent" and dares to enter into the discourse of the Europe and the West using the tools accorded by the latter. Ashcroft clarifies this task of the writers thus:

> By operating inside the discourse of Orientalism, for instance, these intellectuals negate the Orientalist constructions that have been ascribed to them. It is through this process of negation that they are able to become selves as opposed to the identity of mere others that they inherit. This is precisely the voyage in that Fanon made when he wrote about the experience of colonization from a French perspective…. (48)

One must correspondingly be alert to the threat of subalternity emerging as a discourse different from the discourse of the voiceless. From a positive angle, the marginal has begun to be considered as part of accepted discourse through the theorizing of the subaltern. Ghosh has also succeeded in reducing the "noise" created by several dominating factors that hinder the subaltern's speech-act and made it reach the listeners so that it gets registered permanently. The various corrective measures adopted, as outlined hitherto, to amend these attest his earnestness. For this to be practical, not just the listener has to be accommodating, but the factors around him have to be conducive. The message should be interpreted through employing the right methodology. Hence the problem is with the listener, not the speaker, "It is the failure of interpretation, not the failure of articulation" (Mc Leod 195). Thus it points towards a constructive revamp from voicelessness to the powerlessness of the interpreter to decode the message in order to arrive at a solution. In conclusion, in

interpreting the Others, the West must demonstrate more vigilance because as proposed "… what PC fails to recognise is that what counts as 'marginal' in relation to the West has often been central and foundational in the non-west" (Gandhi Preface ix).

PRATHIBHA P “ REDEFINING SUBALTERN DISCOURSE: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE OTHER IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF AMITAV GHOSH. “ THESIS. PG DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND RESEARCH CENTRE ,VIMALA COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), THRISSUR, UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT, 2019.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

> Mistaken are those who imagine that silence is without life; that it is inanimate, without either spirit or voice. It is not: indeed the Word is to this silence what the shadow is to the foreshadowed, what the veil is to the eyes, what the mind is to truth, what language is to life. (CC 25)

Ghosh's quote demonstrates how voicelessness and silence are often seen in relation to each other. Silence is understood as something undesirable but as expressed here "word" is an extension of silence. Word covers light like a veil, misinterprets "truth" as the confused mind does, so that one loses track. It is only to understand silence that word is used. Speech is a tool to arrive at the depths of speechlessness. When we speak we are imposing the meaning that silence eludes. Considering all these, one could reckon that what is relegated as silence is what would otherwise surface by way of its inner voice and make its presence known through inconceivable ways. To avoid this unpredictability that is a menace, silence is treated by the vanguards of humanity in two ways – it is either imparted a conventional form through "well-chosen" words or preferably, by generating contradictory noises, its voice is left unheard or unintelligible. The various elements of the society like literature, education, media etc are the means adopted for this "edifying" enterprise. This chain-like pattern of control mechanism could slacken its grip at times with counter- action is what is utilised by the same societal elements that loop it in the first place. The present study is concerned with the working of such an element, literature,

in disengaging such chains and shielding Silence to preserve/subserve it in the sense outlined.

Literature as an aesthetic medium has enlightened the society and has itself been revived in course of time by the systems of the latter. Thus it has an integral and mutually inclusive relationship with the society. The writers, both fictional and factual, raise the concerns existing in the minds of the people through their works. Most of the critical oppositions are directed towards the structures that lead to subject formations. To analyze the emergence of such subjects is one of the preoccupations of Cultural Studies too. In this process, it blurs the boundaries between disciplines and focuses on the redeeming factors that facilitate judicious representations of individuals and communities. A similar project has been undertaken by the Indian writer, Amitav Ghosh, through his writings. His works, dealing with varied themes, refuse to be categorized and are therefore apt to be considered as interdisciplinary. Anthropology, History, Power/Reason, Science Fiction, Multiculturalism, Politics, Art and Ecology are some of the topics that have featured in his oeuvre. The subaltern aspects associated with these branches also play a significant part of his vocation as each of his works enunciate how discourses come into existence. The protagonists question such formations that tend to privilege certain images and practices. They evolve their own paradigms to challenge these rather than accepting a victimized position.

This crucial purpose is fulfilled without assuming a dominant stature and it alters the discourse of the Cultural Studies itself in a way that promotes a deconstructive approach as the theorist Gayatri Spivak has expounded. The neglect of binaries practiced by Cultural Studies qualifies it as a tool to study subaltern communities which, as endorsed by Raymond Williams in the cultural context, are

also “ordinary”, not to be made “extraordinary” and thereby subjected to indirect suppressions. The hegemonic superstructures construct meanings for all human experiences and are determined and perceived by the public in light of the “knowledge” made accessible to them. A direct questioning of these strategic modes of domination without generalizing is the key feature of Ghosh’s literary masterpieces. He is one writer who takes interest in “subverting” history as narrated by the colonial powers, a sort of delving beyond the palpable reality. His works validate the regional sensibilities and are truthful representations in that sense. In fact they are not representations in the customary sense, but an expedition through the silent world to dissolve such depictions. He deduces its subsistence thus:

> [W]hen we try to speak of events of which we do not know the meaning, we must lose ourselves in the silence that lies in the gap between words and the world. This is a silence that is proof against any conceivable act of scorn or courage; it lies beyond defiance – for what means have we to defy the mere absence of meaning? Where there is no meaning, there is banality, and that is what this silence consists in, that is why *it cannot be defeated* (emphasis added) – because it is the silence of an absolute, impenetrable banality. (SL 218)

Ghosh’s character describes the diffusion of meaning through silence and its definiteness. His representation is not from the conventional point of view where the basis for these representations is decided by the representing faction. Instead, as Spivak advocates, the stress is “on various manifestations of counter-discourse” (Morton 113). The varied nature of the cultural context is also taken into account in Ghosh’s representation unlike that of Spivak. She tends to divide the society into two – the privileged and the underprivileged whereas Ghosh’s works introduce the

heterogeneous experiences of each of the marginalized communities. While theorizing the colonial experiences, Spivak has enhanced critical discourse so as to pave way for further deliberations by writers like Ghosh through their works. When the writers are cautioned against the pitfalls of representation through critical intervention in the form of literary theories, the frequent generalisation of experiences of marginalised groups as part of their specific cultural origin can be evaded.

Culture is not a factor that binds people together in terms of their similarities or something that purports to establish such homogeneity, but one that ideally facilitates heterogeneity through its insistence on exploring the exact extent to which social practices are observed in varying circumstances. The domain of Cultural Studies aims to delineate the underlying interrelationship between different structures which might include concepts directly part of culture and even those that have no direct significance in its framework. Like, for example, it not only concerns itself with elements that form culture, but also those that lead to the formation of one's individuality. It is this component of the field that renders it apt for considering the position of each human being in the process of identity formation. If it is culture that attributes meaning to actions, then its relevance in human lives cannot be disregarded especially in terms of its tendency to exclude certain sections from the course of its functioning. This sort of erasure is achieved by incorporating rhetorical elements to culture through certain tropes that serve to efface or disguise facts and at the same time bring "truth" to existence. Such a cultural portrayal also seems to trace the figures of the deprived lot from the perspective afforded by its own selfish motive. In his debut novel weaving is employed as a trope to denote the mechanism of interconnecting diverse and contradictory elements and thereby achieving equivalence in an omnifarious environment:

> *The Circle of Reason* is … knitted tightly together by a series of motifs and recurring images, such that its open- ended episodic linearity is cross-hatched with patterns that draw on its central metaphor of weaving, which is used as a metaphor for the process of storytelling; at the same time, the history of weaving is used as a synecdoche for the nature of Reason, which is both liberating and oppressive; linear and straightforward, and circular and convoluted; reasonable and unreasonable. (Mondal 8)

The power of weaving is further emphasized by the incident in which the protagonist, Alu miraculously escapes death when a sewing machine prevents a concrete slab from falling over him after the building in which he works collapses. This is interpreted as a blessing from his dead aunt who was a tailor. He embarks on a weaving spree after this episode and succeeds in uniting the majority of the immigrant community in Al Ghazira with the threads of Reason and Purity, which he had imbibed from his uncle, Balaram. Similarly in SL, the trope of the border that is usually applied to demarcate separation stands for a transition which is not always physical but something more abstract like the one between the Self and the Other as echoed in Mondal:

> The shadow lines of the title are accordingly both subjective and objective; experiential and political; they are those invisible borders that mark the transition from youth to maturity, the past from the present, and those intangible but deeply felt markers of identity that mark oneself off from others, one's own 'community' from others', the correlates of which constitute the material borders of political entities such as nation-states which physically mark and limit the spatial and temporal coordinates of their citizens' experiences. (9)

The unnamed narrator in the novel traverses distances by means of imagination as trained by his uncle Tridib and has also identified an alter ego in a foreigner, Nick Price whom he considers a rival in the attempt to win Ila's affection. He could even sense Nick's growth, beside him, as he looks in the mirror everyday irrespective of the extreme part of the globe each of them belong to. In order for a nation to exist, its citizens must accept its imposing presence and configuration in their lives along with the operation of power. It evolves from time to time a lingua franca that controls cross cultural exchanges and attempts to withhold human psyche in a limited segment where considerations of humane feelings give way to discourses of progress and domination. Yet, the indomitable human spirit emerges at times to challenge these enervating considerations through multicultural viewpoints and literature acts as a catalyst in this process. The theme of multiculturalism runs through most of Ghosh's work testifying to the fact that the novelist himself is devoid of any particular nationalist feeling when faced with the concern of representing a liberal outlook towards marginal rights and issues. As Mondal points out when citing IAL, "Ghosh's reconstruction of the lives of the Indian slave and his Jewish master, of the polyglot, cosmopolitan, hybrid world in which they lived and worked, offers a reflective contrast to the rigidities of the modern period". (12)

Ghosh's discovery, during his research, of this exchange between countries in the past proves that history too furthers such compassionate relationships across borders, which have been silenced by the intervening establishments of subjugation. The trope of hybridity functioning in this anthropological document, a product of his D Phil., serves to highlight the inevitability of such constitutions in the world regardless of the instances that annihilate them. The Slave of MS H.6, thus gains entry into the academic world after a great many years of his appearance in a letter

exchanged between his master and fellow trader and gets discovered serendipitously. Another trope that runs through his work is that of the fluidity of discoveries that favour one section of the society over the other. In CC, Ghosh shatters the scientific claims of the West as the only acceptable one and boldly presents the discourse of the East as one of the alternative spaces to rely on. Mondal elaborates it thus:

> Whilst the 'race' to find the cure for malaria (another one of those metaphors that indicate linear notions of history, time and progress) is seen by Ross – and, by implication, his Western competitors – as the means to fame, fortune and the immortality bestowed by History, the counter-scientific cult seeks immortality of a different, more literal kind, allowing Ghosh to entwine subversively the discourse of Science with one of those Indian 'superstitions' that colonialists loved to belittle: reincarnation. (14)

Murugan, in the novel, is the representative of this science of the Orient and his existence itself proves its verifiability. Here, science and scientists are presented as just tools to further the Orient's research unobtrusively and are bestowed with occasional success to sustain their interest and to ensure secrecy for their operations. Thus it can be seen as the radical response of the colonized to the colonizer for manipulating the former's culture. Mondal's observation clarifies that this theme is carried forward in his next novel, GP:

> In this novel, Ghosh continues to engage directly with colonialism and its aftermath. It attempts to represent the human dimension of living through the violent upheavals brought about by the rise and fall of the British Empire, whilst tracing some of Burma's own current political problems back to that period of dislocation and defeat. (16)

The story weaves the chronicle of three families focusing on the theme of colonial effects on tradition, business, relationships, identity and art forms. The familial trope serves to expedite the process of self realization through introspection in an environment rampant with opposing ideological constructions. It is ultimately the artist Dinu who conjoins the threads of survival and liberation by relating the experiences of tolerance and resilience, to his niece Jaya. Thus the process of redemption becomes complete through this final episode that brings this circle of family saga to a perfect finishing point.

The setting for such a narrative is as grand and varied as the subject matter it conveys whereas that of the next work under study, HT, is one that has been in debate owing to its sensitive status as a wildlife sanctuary. The Sunderbans or the tide country as it is widely known, is not just home for animals but also provides shelter to the immigrant community forced to leave their native land at one time and who are presently successful in reclaiming their past roots. They are again pressurized by the authorities to leave their place citing environmental concerns while it is actually political and economic greed that lies behind such drastic steps. Here, the tide country, serves as a trope to signify the need to achieve a balance between the human and the natural world. The characters in the novel relate to the tide country in different ways. While it represents a tourist spot for Kanai, it is an ideological and political ground for Nirmal and Nilima respectively. Piya, the cetologist, approaches it from a passionate professional angle. At the same time it is a means of livelihood and an integral part of identity for people like Fokir from Mondal's viewpoint:

> This subaltern figure is at the heart of the novel and the ethical exploration of the text focuses on his place – or lack of place – in the scheme of things as determined by state authorities in Calcutta and New Delhi, or

> environmentalists in the West, or even in the minds of those steeped in scientific knowledge and modern education. (18)

This seemingly powerless character turns out to be a saviour in the end even if it is at the cost of his own life. His death leads to a transformation in many of the characters and their beliefs which has a corresponding reflection in their notion regarding human/nature interaction. It points towards the power of the unbeatable human spirit in the face of destruction. This distinctiveness of humanity as an unrelenting entity is explored in Ghosh's non-fiction DIC too, "The text represents dancing as far more than a traditional Cambodian performance art; it becomes a trope for the indestructibility of the middle-class culture threatened with extinction during the Pol Pot era" (Dancing). The essay underscores the role of an art form in minimising tension and reviving the general atmosphere of a country and its people even amidst a period of extreme struggle and trying circumstances. Artists like CheaSamy, though old, quickly restore their youthful spirit in order to propagate art. At a time when people are dejected by the language of weapons, only the language of art can hope to redeem their plight. In the modern period, the upsurge of violence to suppress fellow human beings and seize power has resulted in the formation of many martyrs and individual leaders who have to make sacrifices to restore peace and order. ALB is an essay in which the trope of politics is deftly handled so as to reveal the power structures that operate behind autocratic and democratic institutions. Most of such structures thrive by generating symbols that can easily appeal to general public. These symbols need not be always genuine as Ghosh states:

> It takes a military dictator to believe that symbols are inert and can be manipulated at will. Forty years after his assassination, Aung San had his revenge. In a strange, secular reincarnation, his daughter, Suu kyi, came

> back to haunt those who had sought to make use of his death. In 1988, when Burma's decades of discontent culminated in an anti-military uprising, Aung San Suu Kyi emerged from obscurity as one of the country's most powerful voices, the personification of Burma's democratic resistance to military rule. (DICO 65)

Suu Kyi's timely interference in Burmese politics is cited as an important step towards their liberation. The part played by media and her supporters in disseminating information regarding their struggles to the outside world cannot be disregarded. Information transfer has its own drawbacks too because it is not always necessary that the right ones get through. In fact, sieving true content from those that are false is in itself a challenge to many. Rather than absorbing facts one must interpret them by placing them along with others, even those that are contradictory, so that one may attain a true picture of the state of affairs. Otherwise one would be an easy victim to means of control. Mondal adjoins:

> Ghosh does not endorse the view that there are no such things as facts but he does point out that they do not necessarily mean very much by themselves, and certainly they cannot of themselves deliver something called 'truth'. Facts must be interpreted; they must be embedded in discourse; they only speak when placed in narratives. (19)

One revolutionary method to unravel facts, as suggested by the deconstructionists is to subject each text to deliberate misreading. Spivak has successfully experimented with this technique to shatter the myth of authority. The use of rhetoric and the tendency to project falsity as truth have led to the evolution of subversive strategies. "Such a strategy of deliberate misreading draws on Paul de Man's argument that all texts are aware that they are figurative and are therefore open

to misreading" (Morton 114). Thus how the authenticity of established truths proves questionable is one of the major concerns that require international attention. It is not only truth that is undermined in today's society, but also persons and communities that do not fit into the approved categories. Such people often find it difficult to voice their rights and fight for their individuality as they are relegated to the margins.

The eighteenth century German Philosopher Immanuel Kant introduced the term "*dem rohen Menschen*" meaning the "man in the raw" to refer to "the savage and the primitive" who is deprived of a place in the society. Kant in his *The Critique of Judgement* (1790) raises the concept of the "Sublime." He argued "that only cultivated and educated European men have access to the sublime, while non-European subjects are stripped of culture or humanity and relegated to the place of an unrespectable, irrational Other…" (qtd. in Morton 116). As a result of the "deconstructive reading practice" (114), that characterizes modern research, academics and literary works like that of Ghosh, this situation has undergone tremendous change. Alu of COR, the unnamed narrator of SL, the Slave of MS H.6, Murugan, Dinu, Fokir, CheaSamy and Aung San Suu Kyi are all few of the examples from Ghosh's works that testify to this positive outcome. They emerge as people with individual identity who not only question the repressive regimes, but also bestow new dimensions to their raw status by embracing it rather than getting demotivated as the dominating structures would prefer. They are cautioned against the controlling tactics through tropes so that instead of deriving connotations that privilege the dominator, they interpret facts to suit their condition too. There are many instances in Ghosh's works wherein the powerless speaks to power by using the former's own weapon of rhetoric, which justifies the whole process of resistance.

Morton cites the significance accorded to rhetoric by critics too: “Spivak develops de Man’s argument to show how the suppression of rhetoric in the production of truth claims can have damaging consequences in a broader social and political field” (113). When the colonizer manipulated culture with the tool of rhetoric, the colonized started retaliating in the same token by suppressing the civilizing rhetoric and modifying them through contrary interpretations. This could be equated to the concept developed by the Indian aestheticians, *vyanjana*, regarding the “extraordinary significative power which all works of art possess” (Sastri 20). The ancient Indian *Alamkarikas* have also underscored the relevance of “suppression” in conveying meaning to others. This, coupled with radical rewritings of history in a language that challenges dominant discourse, would effectively facilitate dissent. Literature as executed by a prescient writer employing the techniques adopted right from the ancient critics can provide scope for redemption because: “If dominant history writes the popular struggles and peasant rebellions out of national liberation movements however, Spivak suggests that literature can provide a rhetorical space for subaltern groups to re-articulate the suppressed histories of popular struggles”. (Morton 124)

The term “colony” has its origin from Latin which means “farmer” or “settler in a new country” as defined by OED. The role of literature, that of a writer and works in the process of colonisation is substantiated with the terms’ “modern application to the planting of settlements, after Roman or Greek precedents, in newly discovered lands… in the 16th C., by Latin and Italian writers, whose works were rendered into English by Richard Eden” (Colony). As stated further, Eden’s contribution is that he translated geographical works from languages like Latin to English. *The Decades of the NeweWorlde or West India* by Peter Martyr is a Latin

work based on historical documents written by travellers. Such translations that form and shape attitudes in the minds of the Europeans towards people in the other part of the world become the raw material for writers, right from the time of Shakespeare, who mould their stories accordingly leading to consolidation of such ideas. Eden is also cited as the first translator of another explorer, Antonio Pigafetta to English. This translation contains a reference to "Setebos" who is considered as a God by Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The alliance between travel and literature has been a long established one and these have both positive and negative implications.

The roots for decolonisation can also be traced to literature, both fictional and historical. If in earlier times translations paved the way for bridging linguistic gaps, in the subsequent period, with the rise in English as a world language and the increase in the number of people competent in the language owing to colonisation, more firsthand information regarding the colonies and its people provided impetus to the anti-colonial struggles too. The post-colonial world witnessed the replacement of settler power locus with those within a specific geographical boundary. The degree of invasion in this case seemed more aggressive as this was a means to release the frustration of being under coercion oneself for a long time. The psychological superiority afforded by the sense of securing freedom for the nation aggravated this. The chaos that ensued provided an impetus to the resistive measures that were then adopted against one's own countrymen and sustained the spirit to question discrimination.

Though the problems of the marginalised find immense relation to colonial plunder and bigotry, there have been many oppressors apart from the colonisers who ravished the social set up. The predecessors of the coloniser were as ruthless in their strategies as their prototype. This acquires devastating forms especially in foreign

lands as depicted in COR. The migrant community in al- Ghazira is fended by the ancient settler communities there whereas business minded people from other countries incite hatred and foster suspicion in the natives to profit from the ensuing disruption of peaceful co-existence. Mishra and Uma Verma, though Indians, find each other in opposing segments quite often. Mishra's challenge to Uma to prove her cultural affinity is effectively countered by her with the help of other Indians in Algeria including the former's wife. The contrast between the siblings, May and Nick, in their attitude towards the Indians on the one hand and *Tha'mma's* loathing towards her nephew Tridib who is loved by May, a foreigner, on the other hand; reveals kinship to be inconsequential in human bonding. The ill treatment of Ghosh by Abu-'Ali in IAL while most of the other Egyptians guard him from pitfalls and Murugan's company officials and colleagues in CC who constantly discourage him from his research are all examples to substantiate this.

In GP, the older military men from Hardy's village refuse to accept him, a non-white, as their senior; similarly the acceptance gained by the Burmese King and his family quite naturally amongst Indians is eluded to the district collector and his wife who, despite being Indians, represent imperialism. On the other front; Rajkumar, the Indian, loves Burma more than his homeland. Uma Dey, the collector's wife, too finds herself welcome in London and America as a widow while back home she would have had to bear the brunt of customary practices. Piya's identity as a highly educated American citizen does not become an impediment in her relationship with the illiterate Fokir as she respects him for his wisdom. Whereas her Indian roots, instead of being an advantage to her while in India, makes her more vulnerable to the selfish motives of the authorities on whom she has to rely on to conduct research work. Pol Pot, the dictator in DIC is only worse compared to the colonial forces when

considering Cambodian history. Similarly, the descend of Burma from prosperity that attracted settlers to that of a country suppressed by civil war and rebelling groups, point towards the enduring nature of power despite amendment. Ghosh's recent trilogy also raises issues concerning lascars, the labourers in ship. Their pathetic living conditions at sea and sufferings at the hands of Indian labour contractors involved in human trafficking, expose one of the violent forms of oppressions history has ever witnessed, yet rarely discussed about. All these instances testify to the fact that no matter who rules, the desire for power is deep-rooted and with time it is assuming bizarre forms as Ghosh exhumes Martin van Creveld's forewarning:

> 'Van Creveld is arguing that the state's historic monopoly of violence ended with the "Thirty Years War of 1914-45"; that nuclear weapons have rendered war, as waged by states, nearly obsolete… the world will now be dominated by low-intensity conflict; that states in the conventional sense will give way to bands of warlords, that the distinction between government, army and the people will begin to fall apart as never before, especially in the Third World; that groups such as private mercenary bands, commanded by warlords and even commercial agencies (like the old East India Company), will once again take over the function of war making; that "existing distinctions between war and crime will break down." (DICO 92)

It is in such an exigent state of affairs that the present day subalterns have to thrive, both against the external and internal systems of power. The offshoots of the Other, in recent years, tend to assume an oppositional stand, a diminutive (o)ther, to vocalise certain specific concerns which the broader framework allegedly neglects. Since the present study's basic premise is to persist in being alert to the use and abuse of terms that define the policies and identity of a group, the term Other, with initial

capitalization, has been persistently used throughout the chapters as a generic term rather than a buzzword so as to engage in more productive rumination. The introductory chapter with its focus on outlining Ghosh's position in the literary world, traces his biographical details because it facilitates a thorough understanding of the evolution of his works. After establishing his relevance in world literature along with Indian, the chapter's concern with regional literature too is based on the endeavour to form a strong foundation for the arguments that follow. A brief note on his works is provided to substantiate their relevance and to identify the gaps in the studies done so far which also outlines the review of literature on the area under analysis. The chapter culminates with the demarcation of the methodology employed for the study and the chapter divisions.

To reinstate the major findings of the study as revealed through the course of the main chapters, the predicament of the subaltern and the group which constitutes that category itself has undergone much alteration that the voice is no more a matter of concrete bifurcation between the voiced and the voiceless. The urgency with which interpolation has to be carried out in three stages of insertion, interruption and interjection through tactics on the part of the marginalised is cited with examples from Ghosh's works. This is suggested as a means to counter the modern strategies of the powerful. The study also situates the role of the critical organic catalysts, through examples from Ghosh's works, in its attempt to establish the central argument. Considering the essential nature of power, the necessity of rhizomic structures of power and the ways to promote such relations in society rather than the conventional vertical one is also highlighted. The role of literary representations in redeeming the state of the oppressed is significant as it assists in endorsing Others without the feeling of otherness. The regression in the status of the "slave" right from the ancient

period when they occupied a better position to the contemporary epoch where they are marginalised, illuminates the readers on the consequences of embracing otherness. In this process, due vigilance has to be maintained in monitoring discourse formation that flourishes through constraint and restriction as suggested through the study. This would warrant techniques like “voyage in” to debilitate binaries and various subaltern discourse mechanisms like tropes, memory and criss-crossed narrative to question the formation of agencies. Rather than focusing on distinct agencies, the writer attempts to propose a combined venture of the native and foreign forces to evolve a viable alternative. A perfect example for this can be discerned in HT when Piya’s technology is improved with Fokir’s practical skills. The present study being on the works of a writer, initial focus is on the revival of the field of literature itself to trigger the function stated above.

The various theorists like Spivak, Said, Foucault, Bhabha and Ashcroft have also specified the relevance of literature in the process of reclaiming the rights of the marginalised and how writers have to maintain caution while depicting their conditions. This incurs the proper identification of subaltern groups in the first place. The category of subaltern is as such a much contested one as it is no more just defined by financial status, gender, caste etc. As discerned from the works under examination, there are even subalternised events like riots when compared to war, rural and neglected locations like Lalpukur and Sunderbans; nature itself in the form of islands and forests; representatives from the otherwise privileged sections like King Thebaw, certain scientists, travellers, writers, mentally challenged people and those labelled so; animals and creatures like elephant, dolphins, crab; local deities and languages; some countries, languages and cultures.

The procedure undertaken by the writer to supplement their situation includes retrieving information from memory and reinforcing it with details from books, newspaper articles, oral testimonials, archives, manuscripts, diaries and experiences that promote verifiability as in scientific accounts. To authenticate these further the characters often support their narration with references to age, exact setting at the time of occurrence of the incident, the other characters' involved, cross references, description from multiple angles, stories, mythological citations etc. Though the traditional linear model of narration is subverted, the chronological aptness is carefully maintained throughout to ensure consistency in presentation. The vast time period under consideration and frequent switching between related episodes do not impinge on the structural organisation of the works. The internal procedures of exclusion initiated through "constraints" with respect to profitable matters and "restriction" in the case of speech attempts, are attempted to combat with the creation of an ambivalent space. Bhabha's theory on this space as elucidated by Ashcroft suggests the necessity of countering strategies with tactics as detailed through the examples enunciated in the previous chapters. Similarly, as depicted in these chapters, physical limitations are turned to advantage by the characters and sometimes the characters emerge as symbols as in the case of General Aung San and King Thebaw to register their overpowering presence even after death which is enough to dismantle power. While alive, their presence seemed to equate to an absence whereas the absence that should have ensued after their departure is replaced by a presence that prevails upon the usurper. Thus secrecy and deliberate silence can metamorphose into weapons. Literature is another such weapon that strengthens mind and enables one to stay positive at times of hardship.

The study thus analyses how far Ghosh has effectively achieved this objective through his characters and their contexts. The Subaltern Studies group provides a historical background for this endeavour and situates the circumstances peculiar to the Indian context right from the past. Irrespective of the adverse situations, the study analyses how counter resistance can be effective though it confronts severe setbacks in the initial stages. Experimentation with language and its dialects in correspondence to the possibility of communication even without a proper language as in the case of Piya and Fokir further raises suspicion regarding the indispensability of speech. Silence can neither be considered a preferred state nor a sign of weakness. Such optimistic attitude has always benefitted mankind and that is what Ghosh's works also project. This points towards the inevitability of redefining the subaltern predicament from one of extreme victimisation to that of reinstating the claims forcefully through different channels. Primarily it requires one to identify the oppressor, whether it is an imperialist; fellow citizens with money, education and power; or technology as the tendency in recent times. This can be facilitated through human-nature and human-animal relationship too rather than just human-human interactions. Ghosh's works further substantiates this through the following lines: "But here in our city where all law, natural and human, is held in capricious suspension, that which is hidden has no need of words to give it life; like any creature that lives in a perverse element, it mutates to discover sustenance precisely where it appears to be most starkly withheld – in this case, in silence". (CC 22)

PRATHIBHA P “ REDEFINING SUBALTERN DISCOURSE: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE OTHER IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF AMITAV GHOSH. “ THESIS. PG DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND RESEARCH CENTRE ,VIMALA COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), THRISSUR, UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT, 2019.

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APPENDIX
DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH, UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
General Format for Submitting Report on Peer-reviewed Research Publication (latest first)

Sl. No.	Authors in order and Title of Publication*	Journal name, Volume, Number Year & Digital Object Identifier (DOI) Number	Inter-national/ National **	Publisher with ISSN	Web Address of the Journal	Indexed by ***	Impact factor if any
1	Prathibha P "The Power of Women's Politics: A Comparative Study of the Select Works of Amitav Ghosh and Arundhati Roy"	IJELLH (International Journal of English Language, Literature in Humanities), [S.l.], vol. 7.3, March 2019	International	Smart Moves Publication ISSN 2321-7065	www.ijellh.com/OJS/index.php/OJS/article/view/7523	Google Scholar Academia.edu	
2	Prathibha P "Bonding Beyond Cultures: A Reading of Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*"	International Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR) Vol. 6.3 March 2019	International	IJ Publication ISSN 2349-5162	www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR1903B58.pdf	Google Scholar Research Gate	5.87 (as on 2018)

3	Prathibha P "From Genuineness to Charlatanism: The Trauma of the Techno-maniac"	DISCOURSE, Xaverian Research Journal, Vol 3.1, March 2015	International	Dept of English, St Xavier's College for Women, Aluva ISSN: 2321-0214			
4	Prathibha P "*Sin Fronteras*: The New Mestiza Consciousness in Gloria Anzaldua's Poem 'To Live in the Borderlands Means You'"	Pursuits Vol 10, Oct-Nov 2012	National	Research Centre for Comparative Studies, PG Dept of English, Mercy College, Palakkad ISSN: 0974-7400			
5	Prathibha P "The Cultural *Ibis*: Cross-Cultural Encounters in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*"	The Journal of Indian Writing in English (Special Issue) Vol 40.2, July 2012	National	Dept of English, Sri Vasavi College (SF Wing), Erode ISSN: 0302-1319			

6.	Prathibha P "Unleashed(?) Chains of Divinity and Gender: An Interpretation of Muthal Naidoo's *Flight from the Mahabarat"*	The IUP Journal of Commonwealth Literature, Vol. 4.1, January 2012	International	The Icfai UP ISSN: 0974-8822			

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Specific Remark/ Recommendation of the Chairperson, PGBS/Head of the Research Centre, based on the above criteria:

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