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**MIGRATION AND STRUGGLES IN AMITAV GHOSH'S  
THE CIRCLE OF REASON**

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**Abstract:**

*The present thesis is a venture to explore the journey of refugees on the post-colonial theme of the meaning of home and the plight of homelessness, which Amitav Ghosh delineates in his novels; the concept of freedom, the agonizing stories and the impossible decisions that migrants have to make as they head toward what they believe is a better life. The fictions of Amitav Ghosh are marked by extreme themes that go side by side with post colonialism. The introductory chapter discusses the history, growth and development of Indian English Literature from 1880 down to the present day. It also traces Amitav Ghosh's biography and a descriptive chronological examination of his works and is an endeavor at placing Amitav Ghosh in Modern Indian English Literary world.*

**Keywords:** *Immigration, Dislocation, Insecurity, Linguistic Barriers, Rumours, Religious Intolerance, Negotiation, Domination, Suffering, Humiliation and Cultural Inheritance, etc.*

**Introduction:**

Amitav Ghosh is very prominent author in the genre of modern Indian English novel. His literary concerns are histories, knowledge systems, culture and beliefs. He has a discrete identity among his contemporaries. Ghosh has become one of the central figures to have emerged from the English literary field to the new writing in the 1980's. His writings have initiated criticism of universalism and nationalism. Ghosh books enable the readers to rethink the social, philosophical and cultural issues.

Ghosh' father was a lieutenant-colonel in the Indian army who later became a diplomat. As a result, Ghosh grew up in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. As a consequence of this, in almost all major works of Ghosh, he never misses an opportunity in portraying the dilemma of migration and its consequences. He is a continual researcher, traveller, journalist, novelist, and an essayist. Since Ghosh is a febrile traveller and a diasporic writer, he details with the theme



of background work of history in his novels. Therefore, the study tries to explore migration as a theme with reference to colonial and postcolonialism.

The writings of Ghosh play an important and unique role in the field of postcolonial literary and migration theory. Movement of people across geo-political boundaries gives rise to new paradigms in social sciences, humanities and research. Historical events like Partition, War, Colonialism and globalization and several other major forces lead the people to migrate to other places. Displacement of people across borders results in intricate relationships when migrants continue to regroup and converge within shared cultural and religious characteristics, recreating a structural functional society. For a wider research, new keywords emerge through this process.

Among the Indian diasporic novelists like Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry, Anita Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Ghosh is one of the acclaimed Indian English diasporic writers. These writers are tangled between Indian and the global. The main works of these writers are autobiographies and centre on issues like rootlessness, homelessness, displacement, dislocation and nostalgia. Both colonial and postcolonial era features migration, displacement and de territorialisation of culture and diaspora. People's aspirations and hopes become unfulfilled after the war and partition of India, leads to increase in diaspora. Ghosh' writing depicts the diasporic condition of that era.

The term diaspora has been widely used by scholars of different streams like anthropology, literary theory, cultural criticism and sociology. Much research has been done on this topic involving different disciplines and perceptions that it has become a complex phenomenon. In general, it is violent and crucial, displacement of people from their motherland to other areas. The traditions and cultures are fixed in the migrant's mind side by side. Diaspora is not only restricted to physical moment but it affects migrants psychologically as well.

The theme of diaspora is related to indentured labourers in his fiction. In many of his novels, Ghosh summarizes the impact of colonial encounter on the cultural, social and political lives of independent countries. Ghosh brings forth the untold story of an individual against the backdrop of history. He attempts to focus more on the history that is not said and seeks to establish a link between history and imagination. In his novels, Ghosh presents the impact of past over the present through characters subjected to the events of historical migration.

Migration is an important issue since ancient times. Over the past twenty years there is a rapid growth in literature that addresses the topics such as migration, diaspora, displacement, identity crisis, quest for identity, transnationalism and culturalism. The literatures in these areas are simultaneously relates to one another and overlapping, yet discrete. Under the concept of migration several issues like identity crisis, adaptability, suffering, isolation, alienation, and cultural conflict, linguistic barrier, longing and yearning have discussed and related to the characters of Ghosh in the thesis. Identity is a complex phenomenon, which discusses various aspects - psychological, economic, cultural and sociological aspects of an individual. To understand these aspects better, it is important to integrate these aspects to show contextual relativity.

The thesis studies the select novels of Amitav Ghosh from a literary perspective to explore the method of Ghosh in developing and narrating the theme of migration, as a





background to his works. The political, historical, cultural, economic and psychological considerations of migration and the impact on the characters of Ghosh' novels also find ample space.

Migration, as a major theme in his novels, is an outcome of extensive travelling by Ghosh. His extensive travel, during childhood and academic life in Bangladesh, Burma, India, U.K., and Egypt are evident in the frequent migration of his characters. Ghosh' characters do not belong to one place; the issues of displacement, dislocation and identity crisis are also the main concerns, which reflects in the behavior of Ghosh' characters. His works deal not only with past stories, but also project characters involved in migration. All sorts of migration that form refuge, exile and displacement have been well dealt with an influence and the struggle of the characters. Migrants are in search of truth, self-identity, and self-knowledge. Their ability to adjust, adopt and adapt is strong; their pain and sufferings, uprootedness, nostalgia, alienation, conflict with the place and longing for home also exhibits in a picturesque manner. The novels of Ghosh convey a sense of place and displacement.

### ***The Circle of Reason:***

The Circle of Reason, the first novel of Amitav Ghosh. He was introduced to the literary world with The Circle of Reason. It was published by Hamish Hamilton, London, 1986. The Circle of Reason was selected as a New York Times Notable Book and its French edition won him Prix Medicis, one of the famous literary awards of France. Ghosh is a victim sufferer of disastrous events that happened in the partition of Bengal. He writes mainly for the non-Indian audience concerning the Indian condition. To understand the theme, one has to know Indian form of socialism in 1960's and 70's. He recommends that one cannot obtain clear solutions to problems while ignoring the condition and history of the people practicing on Indian socialism.

The Circle of Reason addresses the present day human race plight of migration, existential crisis and alienation. Ghosh divides his novel into three parts, named after three gunas of Indian Philosophy; Satwa; Reason, Rajas; Passion and Tamas; Death, containing nine, ten, and three chapters respectively. The novel has multiple stories each equally important and interesting. Primarily, there are three stories that bind three characters.

The novel has different modes of narratives involving realism, fantasy and magic realism. The novel brings together all the characters treated as equal and each voice possess his/her own distinct world views, creating a discourse. There are multiple characters in the novel that are representatives of historical tendencies. These characters follow different beliefs and customs. Each character emerges as a full-fledged voice in his/her right. The character Balaram's birth year (1924) reminds one of the crucial moments of the nineteenth century in the history of Indian immigration to the West. Balaram's passion is for phrenology and carbolic acid and he is influenced by the life of Pasteur. Bhudeb Roy is a contemporary political materialistic man. Zindi is presented as a realistic and dynamic trader. Mrs. Verma projects a voice that rejects rationalistic thinking. Alu, the protagonist becomes a symbol of rootlessness. Different characters are preoccupied with different things.

In the novel, The Circle of Reason Ghosh tries to bring out native knowledge nevertheless it may not realize the prominence of 'truth' from the perspective of western



scientific establishments. Balaram is obsessed with physiognomy. Physiognomy is the study of features and shape of a person's body or face. Balaram applied his physiognomy theory on Alu and Bhudeb Roy. This is due to his westernized education. Alu's head bears a massive spectacle shaped lump, looked harmless enough. Alu's physiognomy was a compact face with generous lips and large eyes. Looking at his face, nobody could have called the boy handsome or ugly.

To conclude, the present chapter presents the conclusion of the study of select novels of Amitav Ghosh. The study explored the style of Ghosh in developing and narrating the concept of migration. The political, sociological, economical and psychological considerations of migration and the impact on the characters of Ghosh' novels were examined. Migration, as a major theme in his novels, is an outcome of extensive travelling by Ghosh. His extensive travels during childhood and academic life in Bangladesh, Burma, India, U.K. and Egypt are evident in the frequent migration of his characters. Ghosh' characters do not belong to one place; the issues of displacement, dislocation and identity crisis are the main concerns. His works deal not only with past stories, but also project characters involved in migration. The migrations that form refuge, exile and displacement have been well dealt with impact and the struggle of the characters. Migrants are in search of truth, self-identity and self-knowledge. Their ability to adjust, adopt and adapt is strong; their pain and sufferings, uprootedness, nostalgia, alienation, conflict with the place and longing for home also exhibit in a picturesque manner. Hence, the novels of Ghosh convey a sense of place and displacement.

Migration is defined as the physical movement of people within and between societal systems and this makes its strong presence in Ghosh' books through numerous migrant characters. Migration happens to these characters due to events occurring in the history of a nation. Ghosh' characters are both historical and non-historical. The characters experience dislocation in his novels. Consequently, there is an association between history of a nation and migration of people.

Ghosh' novels are a testimony for the readers to think about migration and how it emerges from the beginning. In all the four novels of Ghosh taken up for the study, the migration grapples with identity, religion, nation, belongingness, treatment, language, tradition and customs. With these, Ghosh explores the characteristic features of migration like dislocation, insecurity, linguistic barriers, rumours, religious intolerance, negotiation, domination, suffering, humiliation and cultural inheritance. These are the common features, which are brought into the characters either through migration or travel. Indeed, the travel and its related conditions such as migration and exile are recurrent themes in the works of many postcolonial writers.

Amitav Ghosh' novels raise numerous related to people on the margins. Reaching out to the voices of several problems through the marginalized, the works discuss the cause and effect of migration in select novels. There is a scope for further research on migration; it is a multi-dimensional concept, differing from person to person. Ghosh enlightens and gives an opportunity to highlight the forgotten or neglected stories of the wretched and dispossessed.



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