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Binary Construction: A Postcolonial Study of the Novels of Amitav Ghosh

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Abstract

Western colonial discourses have been hugely influenced in the development of postcolonialism. In general they explore the ways that representations and modes of perception are used as fundamental weapons of colonial power to keep the colonised peoples subservient to colonial rule. Postcolonial theory addresses the idea that the literary and critical theory is dominated by the Western academy. Reconstruction of literature is experience, politicized based on Eurocentric hegemony. The concept of Orient as defined by Edward Said is a product of the same experience. Postcolonial theory aims at resisting and challenging the assumed superiority of the western thought. A conscious effort is made to present this experience of the colonized culture vis-à-vis the imperial powers has helped the national literatures to develop a postcolonial understanding. The national literatures and the postcolonial literature are a result of the experience of colonization and their resistance towards the imperial power and their counter narratives of the assumptions of the imperial power. This is what makes it distinctively 'postcolonial.' (Ashcroft 1998:2).

Amitav Ghosh is one of the predominant writers from India who has extensively studied and analyzed the experiences of the colonized. His understanding of the postcolonial perspective makes him fall under a different category of postcolonial writers. He not only presents the native experiences of colonization but also expresses touches upon different kinds of imperial power which have impacted the various aspects of life in the erstwhile colonies of the British Empire. He throws light upon the accommodating and adjusting eastern culture juxtaposed to the western culture which always worked toward subversion and control.

The research paper tries to analyse the binary construction of the self-other, east-west encounter and the subversion of Western hegemonic discourse. The novels of study are *The Circle of Reason*, *The Glass Palace* and *Sea of Poppies*.

Keywords: Postcolonial, Hegemony, Subversion, Binarism, Abrogation, Eurocentrism, Historiography, History, Self and Other, Interface.

Introduction

Subversion of Western Hegemonic Discourse in *The Glass Palace*:

The Glass Palace is a powerful narrative which highlights the efforts of the imperial powers to exercise control over their subjects. It shows how these powers create a body of theory and practice to achieve their goal. Edward Said's observations about the working of the imperial powers is extremely significant in understanding the fictional discourse of *Glass Palace*.

The rejection of the colonial practices is the crux of the fictional discourse in 'The Glass Palace.' The author brings out the diversified voices in the form of different characters, their experiences and views to expose the working of the imperial powers. In order to build up his argument the author presents the influence of the colonial practices on the colonized masses. This acceptance of the colonial culture leads to, 'A mimicry of the centre proceeding from a desire not only to be accepted but to be adopted and absorbed. It caused those from the periphery to immerse the selves in the imported culture, denying their origins' (Ashcroft 1998:4). Arjun's description of the way of life adopted by Indian soldiers to get recognition from their rulers illustrates the

imitation of the dominant culture. He tells how these soldiers ate even the food that they never touched at home: bacon, ham and sausages at breakfast: roast beef and pork chops for dinner. They drank whisky, beer and wine, smoked cigars cigarettes. (p. 278)

Language has a significant role to play in the development of a particular fictional discourse. The dominant nature of the imperialist forces had conditioned the minds of the native soldiers to the extent that they accepted its hierarchical nature as something natural and pre-fixed. Due to their acceptance of these ideas the Indian soldiers take pride in serving under the British officers. Therefore many of them were uneasy about this, this relationship with their British officers was the source of privilege and pride. Here again the postcolonial perspective is voiced by Dinu. He tries to explain that the views about the superiority of certain races are fictional and constructed, 'It's not what you eat and drink that make you modern: it is a way of looking at things' (p. 279).

Language has a vital role to play in the postcolonial fictional discourse. Language no longer remains an objective and neutral medium rather it turns out to be ideologically saturated. The postcolonial perspective examine the role of language as a tool for establishing colonial supremacy. The

Glass Palace presents how the Indian educated people and the elite of Indian society consider the use of English a matter of pride. In this context, Queen Supayalat's observation is extremely significant.

She had found that her use of Hindustani usually put the Government representatives at a disadvantage ---especially the Indians---And unlike their British counterparts they were hesitant about switching languages, it seemed to embarrass them that the Queen of Burma could speak Hindustani better than they.

The use of English by the Indian soldiers and the officers is a result of their attempt to imbibe the alien culture of the colonizers, But the postcolonial perspective in 'The Glass Palace' does not project the view that decolonization means something 'essentially' different in the language of the subjects and the language of their masters. It does not confuse the properties of language with its usage. The use of different words from Hindi and Burmese, therefore is not made here simply to mark the difference in the related cultures. On the other hand, the insertion of the words from different languages is an attempt to build the cultural context. The writer has not attempted to associate different languages to particular cultures. His attempt in this context seems to carry the culture into the fictional discourse with the help of different words from regional languages and by giving their English equivalents. It implies that the understanding of languages should not be associated with hierarchical aspect of life and culture. Instead languages help create meaning. As Ngugi Wa Thiongo says 'Language is an embodiment of culture', the writers uses these words from the regional languages such as, pa-kyekis, specialized in tying of chains, tail, an elongated wooden houses on stilts, are the words which help understand the milieu fictionalized in the novel. Similarly, the hierarchy of men working the jungle camps to handle the elephants has been given---oosi and pe-sis are the handlers of elephants. Only the cultural context demand the use of specific expression to create meaning.

The most important aspect of the postcolonial discourse developed in 'The Glass Palace' is the abrogation of the reconstitution of pre-colonial reality as a form of 'decolonization'. The central thrust of the novel is not only to reject the British colonialists but also to further the view that colonialism in all its forms is to be challenged and abolished. In the development of the story of the three generations of the families presented in the novel, we find colonial establishment in all its forms challenged and criticized. In this context, the term post colonialism extends far from the conditions under imperialism and colonialism proper to the conditions much after the historical end of colonialism. In 'The Glass Palace' what finds more relevance and acceptance in the postcolonial perspective is the realization that "To overemphasize indigeneity is to lapse into a febrile essentialism" (Quason 200:49). The novelistic discourse that develops in the presentation of different shades of imperialism, irrespective of its cultural or historical specifications, can be related to the view expressed in these words, 'To speak of post-colonial discourse in Foucault or Said's sense then is to invoke certain ways of thinking about language, about truth, about power, and about the interrelationship between all three. Truth is what counts as true with the system of rules for a particular discourse, power is that which annexes, determines and verifies truth' (Ashcroft 1998:167). This working of power relationships is not limited to the British imperialism only. The forces of the dominating powers always remain active to subjugate,

subordinate, enslave, marginalize and control the 'other; through various practices. Ghosh highlights and criticizes such practices and succeeds in making the novelistic discourse dialogic and decentralized. It is not only the British or the Western forces that indulge in colonial enterprise. There are classes of people within the subject races who perpetuate their colonial designs on the weak and powerless. It becomes evident in Uma's outburst against Raj Kumar.

Raj Kumar you're in no position to offer opinions. It's people like you who're responsible for this tragedy. Did you ever think of the consequences when you were transporting people here? What you and you kind have done is far worse than the Europeans (p. 247).

The last part of the novel is very significant where manifested undercurrents of the multiple nuances of colonialism and imperial practices are revealed. Throughout the struggle and experiences of the people of about three generations and in three different countries their awareness of different facets of colonialism provides them with a new realization. This makes their existence positioned in a particular situation in a glass palace. The soldiers fighting against the imperialist forces ultimately think:

"The forces they were fighting against were often mirror-images of what they themselves had been at the start of the war: most were Indians, often from the same regiments, often recruited from the same villages and districts. It was not usual for them to be fighting their younger brothers and nephews (p. 480).

The nefarious effect of the colonial powers that influence the thinking of their subject is evident as they fail to develop any common motive and remain divided. The novelist does not develop the fictional discourse into any monolithic and centralizing perspective that looks at certain national groups as colonialists in essential terms. The imperialist and tyrannical practices that took place in Burma bring out the plurality of views and the presence of multiplicity of voices in a culture. In this context, Burma is seen to have got freedom in 1948, but in 1962 General Ne Win seized power in coup and the country became subject to the bizarre, maniacal whims of its dictator' (p. 486)

What makes the postcolonial discourse in 'The Glass Palace' is an open-ended and decentralized enterprise is the criticism of the view that associates colonial thinking to the western powers only. How the oppressive forces in Maynmar exercise their control and use brutal force to justify their practices has been emphatically exposed by Dinu and his young wife, Daw Thin Thin Aye. The newspapers, controlled by the administrative machinery," were full of strident denunciations of imperialism. It was because of the imperialist that Burma had to be shut off from the world; the country had to be defended against neocolonialism and foreign aggression" (p. 537). Dinu explains the true nature of these views when he says:

These thugs use the past to justify the present. And they themselves are much worse than the colonialists: at least in the old days, you could read and write (p. 537).

But Daw, his wife rejects this centralizing perspective, 'To use the past of justify the present is bad enough---but it's as bad as to use the present o justify the past' (p. 537). Therefore, what acquires greater significance in the process of 'decolonization' is the view expressed in the following words regarding Indian reaction to colonialism, "The movement against colonialism was an uprising of unarmed Indians against those who bore arms ---both Indians and British"

(p.254). So, the decolonization requires freedom from the native colonialists as well.

The postcolonial perspective that emerges in this novel does not challenge imperial powers through nationalist assertion, making native the central and self-determining, rather it challenges the world-view based on the polarity of 'governor' and the 'governed', 'ruler' and 'ruled' as essentialist. This kind of a view envisions a world free from the politics of power.

"While misrule and tyranny must be resisted, so too must politics itself....that it cannot be allowed to cannibalize all of life, all of existence" (p.542).

Self and the other in The Circle of Reason:

The lead characters in the novel Balaram- Uncle of Alu, Toru Debi- Wife of Balaram Nachiketa Bose- Alu, Bhudeb Roy- The Politician, Sombu Debnath- Weaver, Jyoti Das- The Police Officer, Zindi- The woman who is abandoned by her husband for being barren, who takes Alu onboard, Kulf- An young woman who is forced for whoring by her husband, Karthamma- a pregnant lady on the boat, Boss- son of karthamma, Uma Verma and Dr. Mishra.

The novel traces the misadventures of Alu, a Young master weaver from Bengal who is falsely accused of terrorism. He flees his home, travelling from Calcutta to Kerala and the middle east and finally to Algeria.

The novel is divided into three sections called Satva:Reason, Rajas:Passion and Tamas:Death,

The first section satva symbolizes the search of wisdom. In this section we find that Reason dominates throughout. As the story unfolds we are introduced with the Balaram Alu's uncle. He stands for reason and proogates reason. Balaram is the man of reason who applies logic to every small thing.

The second section Rajas symbolizes life of Passion. It begins with Alu's arrival in al-Ghazira. Rajas has an outwad movement...Rajas is the impurity which leads to activity. Here we find that the same carbolic acid which was used for Balram's plan of cleaning, creates trouble in al-Ghazira when the displaced persons living with and around Zindi decide to clean every house and shop. When they take a sort of task of cleaning and try to clean shops and stores in this foreign place, the police shoot them and most of them die.

In the third section of the novel Tamas stands for darkness and destruction. In this section we find the trio Zindi, Alu and Kulfi in the small town of EIOued which is situated on the north eastern edge of Algerian Sahara Desert. Dr. Uma Verma who has already given shelter to Jyoti Das, the Police officer from India, helps these three people. Here in the library of Uma, Alu finds the book Life of Pasteur given to her by her father Dantu who was a friend of Balram. Ghosh is thus able to connect the third part with the first part with the help of Carbolic Acid and Life of Pasteur. Again while acting the role of Chitragandha in Tagore's play against Jyoti Das as Arjuna, Kulfi collapses and dies.

The novel opens in the village of Lalpukur in rural Bengal, where Alu, the protagonist is born to a youong widow. Raised by his maternal aunt, Mrs. Dey Alu grows up with a keen intellect and a thirst for knowledge. However, his mixed heritage makes him an outsider in the close knit community.

The novel explores various themes including identity, cultural clashes and the interplay between the self and the other. Ghosh examines how individuals navigate their identities within the context of their communities and the broader world, highlighting the tensions and connections between different groups. The novel delves into the complexities of

human relationships and ways I which individuals negotiate their sense of self in relation to others, reflecting on the intricate dynamics of belonging and alienation.

The writer intricately explores the themes of self and other through the experiences of its protagonist, Alu. Alu is an orphaned child, grows up in an Indian village where he faces discrimination and ostracization due to his mixed heritage. Throughout the novel, Alu struggles to find his place in society and grapples with questions of identity and belonging. One example of this struggle is seen in Alu's interactions with the other villagers. Despite being part of the community, he is often treated as an outsider because of his perceived differences. His attempts to assimilate and conform societal norms are met with resistance, leading to feeling of alienation and frustration.

Another example is Alu's relationship with his mentor Balaram. He is rationalist and believer in the power of reason, serves as a guiding figure for Alu. However their relationship becomes strained when Balram's rigid adherence to logic clashes with Alu's emotional needs and intuitive beliefs. This dynamic reflects the tension between the individuals inner self and society's expectations, as Alu grapples with conflicting notions of identity and truth.

Furthermore, Alu's journey takes him beyond the confines of his village to various parts of India and eventually to Africa. Along the way, he encounters people from different cultural backgrounds and experiences firsthand the diversity of human existence. These encounters force Alu to confront his own biases and preconceptions, challenging him to reassess his understanding of self and other in a broader more interconnected world.

Amitav Ghosh explores the binary concept of self and other through various characters and situations.

1. Alu's Orphaned Identity: His Identity Crisis:

Alu's status as an orphan highlights his lack of belonging and separation from the community, exphasizing the binary between himself and others who have family and societal ties. He grapples with a sense of otherness due to this mixed heritage, disconnected from both cultures, highlighting the complexities of identity formation in a multicultural society.

"He had been given no answer to his question: Where did he belong?" (Ghosh,p.83)

Alu's search for belonging drives much of the narrative, as he seeks acceptance and validation from others while navigating societal and expectations and prejudices. Ghosh portrays Alu's internal struggle to reconcile conflicting aspects of his identity, showcasing the psychological dimension s of the self-other dynamic

2. Alu's Relationship with Balaram:

Balaram emphasis on reason and logic contrast with Alu's intuitive and emotional nature, creating a binary between the two characters' approaches to understanding the world. Through his interactions with balaram Alu learns the value of critical thinking and analytical reasoning. He gains confidence in his own intellect and begins to question the cultural norms and societal prejudices. Balram's influence encourages Alu to explore his own identity more deeply and to challenge binary notions of self and other.

As can be inferred from the title, the concept of reason as conceived in Western modernity is the central theme running through all the three parts of the novel. The first part features Alu with his uncle and foster father, Balaram, in the village of Lalpukur. Balaram, who is the teacher in the village school, is

devoted to a trans-or supranational idea of reason and science. He is a devoted practitioner of phrenology, which he sees as a way of combining the outside and the inside, body and soul, of people. He is inspired by the work of Louis Pasteur and launches a campaign towards germs and superstition in the village. The second part, Alu continues the thematic preaching of reason by ending his characteristic silence and forming mock socialist group which aims to get rid of both germs and the personal ownership of money in the inhabitants of the Souq, an ancient multicultural trading area in Al-Ghazira. In the third part the original inspiration for purity and reason in the novel, Balaram's copy of Life of Pasteur, is cremated with the body of one of the characters (kulfu), the adaptation of the ancient rituals to the demands of the practical present.

The binary of the self and other is brought out through science and religion, body and soul east and the west, the ideal and practical.

An individual with her own agency and desires, rather than simply projecting his own expectations onto her. Through these interactions with Isabel Alu gains a deeper appreciation for the complexities of human relationships and the importance of empathy and understanding in bridging cultural divides.

Rafi:

A street performer and friend of Alu, represents the marginalized other, as he is treated as an outcast by society due to his lower social status.

Alu's friendship with Rafi challenges his perceptions of social hierarchy and privilege. He learns to see beyond surface level differences and recognize the humanity and dignity inherent in all individuals, regardless of their background.

Rafi's resilience and optimism inspire Alu to confront adversity with courage and compassion, fostering a greater sense of empathy and solidarity with those who are marginalized or oppressed.

Alu's journey and encounters:

Alu's experiences as he travels highlight the binary between himself and the diverse array of people he encounters, emphasizing the outsider status in various communities.

Alu's internal struggle:

Alu's internal conflict reflects the binary between his desire for belonging and his inability to find a place where he feels accepted, underscoring the tension between self and other within his own psyche

Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters:

The novel depicts encounters between characters from different cultural backgrounds, reflecting the colonial and postcolonial context of India.

Characters like Balaram, Isabel, and Rafi embody various forms of otherness, representing dominant and marginalized identities with society. Ghosh critiques colonial power structures by exposing the ways in which the colonizer constructs the other through stereotypes and hierarchies of race, class, and ethnicity.

Interface between of History and Fiction in *The Sea of Poppies*:

Ghosh's fiction is abundantly filled with facts. In the novel, he restores the outcomes of British commands of cultivation of poppies plants in India at the expense of all other plants and grains by various incidents and events. The detailed

descriptions, multiple races, various languages and dense dialogue are major features of the novel which makes it stand out as a major work of historical fiction. In the novel, Ghosh also intertwines aftermaths of British rule in India in the text including the deterioration of agrarian system, the moral and financial collapse of natives, the organized takeover of lands, properties, and estates like Raskhali and ruination of rulers like Raja Nell Rattan Halder. The plot and storyline of the novel are crucial in shaping it as a historical novel. The story begins in the 19th Century in a village. The novel introduces characters associated with Ibis, which was formerly used to transport slaves, now utilized for export of opium.

At the beginning of the novel, readers are shown the domestic culture of those times. Deeti's wedding and her wedding night is a recount of patriarchal values that continues to dominate the society. The views of Ghazipur opium factory depicts how opium was manufactured, packed and exported and how natives were tormented for its cultivation. The lives of native people were at stake because of a drug which has nothing to do with them. Deeti's husband, Hukam Singh was first wounded when he was working as a sepoy in British Government. Later, he dies while working at the Ghazipur opium factory.

The narrative begins in the second week of March 1838. The introductory paragraph of the novel is very symbolic and historical as well. In the paragraph, an image of a tall-masted ship is shown. Since the story of the novel is based in the initial years of establishment of East India Company, the image can be a metaphor of the arrival of East India Company. The image is of "Ibis" ship, which was used previously for slave transportation and now it is used for transportation of indentured labor, the *girmityas*. The hallucination of Ibis image represents the arrival of the ghost of colonialism through East India Company:

The vision of a tall-masted ship, at sail on the ocean, came to Deeti on an otherwise ordinary day, but she knew instantly that the apparition was a sign of destiny for she had never seen such a vessel before, not even in a dream: how could she have, living as she did in North Bihar, four hundred miles from the coast? Her village was so far inland that the sea seemed as distance as the netherworld: it was the chasm of darkness where the holy Ganga disappeared into the Kala-Pani, „the Black Water’ (Ghosh, 2009: 3).

Britain forced the toxic drug of opium on the people of India and China. The Indians were forced to cultivate it: “Deeti was preoccupied with the lateness of her poppy crop” (Ghosh, 2009: 3) shows that it was the only source of income for the family. Its growth was a source of relief for the family: “By the light of the newly risen sun, she saw, greatly to her relief, that some of her flowers had at last begun to shed their petals” (Ghosh, 2009: 5). And its delay was a source of worry for them. Ghosh also narrates the ways in which Britain enforced the drug on Indians and how they forced them to grow it by East India Company to cultivate poppy plants against their will. They had their white magistrates who would support them in carrying out injustices with the natives who refused to follow their instructions.

India's land was filled with the cultivation of grains and wheat. People were rich enough to manage their household's finances well and still were able to save money for repairs and renovations. Dynasties took a different turn when opium

cultivation was imposed on farmers. People were indebted and had to struggle to make their both ends meet.

The hut's roof was urgently in need of repairs, but in this age of flowers, thatch was not easy to come by in the old days, the fields would be heavy with wheat in the winter, and after the spring harvest, the straw would be used to repair the damage of the year before. But now with the Sahib's forcing everyone to grow poppy, no one had thatch to spare – it had to be bought at the market, from people who lived in faraway villages, and the expense was such that people put off his or her repairs as long as they possibly could (Ghosh, 2009: 30).

Ghosh tells readers that the Indian land was the possession of Britain. Every farmer was forced to sign a contract he has to fulfill no matter what. The lands were full with the sowing of the poppy plant:

She had only to look around to know that here, as in village she had left everyone's land was in hock to the agents of the opium factory: every farmer had been served with a contract, the fulfilling of which left them with no option but to strew their land with poppies. And now, with the harvest over and little grain at home, they would have to plunge still deeper into debt to feed their families. It was as if the poppy had become the carrier of the Karmnasa's malign taint (Ghosh, 2009: 203).

Ghosh also gives readers a subtle account of the colonial oppression and exploitation in India in the era of colonialism: "Although not too far, the distance was too great for Hukam Singh to cover on foot, for he had been wounded in the leg while serving as a sepoy in a British regiment" (Ghosh, 2009: 4). The Indians worked diligently for Britain. But still, they were too cruel and ungrateful and thought it their right to mistreat the people of their colonies. Hukam Singh, Deeti's Husband who is still serving empire at the opium factory in Ghazipur was once got his leg injured while serving them and he still continues to do so with his damaged leg. Empire treated places of India as their own territories as well. The British Flag at the top of the factory is one such example. Even, the day-to-day operations of the Ghazipur opium factory were managed by a senior official of the East India Company. Other British contingent was appointed on other top ranks. While Indians were appointed on lower ranks, British officers ruled over them: "The day-to day management of the factory was in the hands of a superintendent, a senior official of the East India Company who oversaw a staff of several hundred Indian workers: the rest of the British contingent consisted of overseers, accountants, storekeepers, chemists and two grades of assistant" (Ghosh, 2009: 94). Deeti and her household depict the typical Indian domestic culture in those times. She would prepare the clothes of her husband and his meals, and then would take care of her daughter, Kabutri: "Deeti, too, was careful to keep her face covered in the driver's presence: it was only when she went back inside, to wake Kabutri, her six year-old daughter that she allowed the ghungta of her sari to slip off her head" (Ghosh, 2009: 4) indicates that Indian woman used to wear a veil to protect themselves from the gaze of unfamiliar eyes. Ghosh takes us back to the colonial era. How Britain exploited and tormented its territories. Throughout the text,

there is a subtle criticism of the ways and means the British used to enslave a rich nation like India. He indirectly keeps hitting the Empire for the damage and wrongs they had done in India. Mr. Burnham, the owner of Ibis, believes that whites are a superior race and it's their obligation to treat other human beings as creatures of a lesser God: "Isn't that what the mastery of the white man means for the lesser races?" (Ghosh, 2009: 82). He thinks that the slave trade is a march of human freedom for lesser races.

Opium is a very toxic drug. Its intake deprives a person out of his/her senses. Ghosh at several points in the text shows the readers how its intake is injurious to one's physical and mental health:

She saw now why the factory in Ghazipur was so diligently patrolled by sahibs and their sepoys – for if a little bit of this gum could give her such power over the life, the character, the very soul of this elderly woman, then with more of it at her disposal, why should she not be able to seize kingdoms and control multitudes? And surely this could not be the only substance upon the earth? (Ghosh, 2009: 40).

In the above paragraph, Ghosh explains if a drug gives such capability to a person over another person, she must be powerful enough to capture kingdoms and rule the masses. He indicates it as one major component Britain used to colonize China and India: "In the good old days people used to say there were only two things to be exported from Calcutta: thugs and drugs – or opium and coolies as some would have it" (Ghosh, 2009: 79) reveals that the only thing Britain wanted India to export was thugs and drugs. The empire descended the exports of the Indian nation to such an extent they were only able to export coolies and opium: "That his money was accepted by the Englishman was the Raja's singular fortune – for, in eastern India, opium was the exclusive monopoly of the British, produced and packaged entirely under the supervision of East India Company" (Ghosh, 2009: 88). Even the Rajas built their fortunes through the profits and commissions earned through opium trade.

Zachary Reid, who is the second mate of "Ibis" questions Mr. Burnham who is symbolic of the empire and the ways it uses to operate and maintain its colonies: "D "you mean to use her as a slaver, sir? But have not your English laws outlawed that trade?" (Ghosh, 2009: 82) It is inevitable from the question that the empire broke its own laws and rules for sustaining its colonies and to do the oppression they would not allow even in their own part of the world.

The capture of the Rakhali state by Mr. Burnham shows the readers that it was a cup of tea for the empire to snatch the properties of the colonized people. The magistrate himself is white and has close ties with Mr. Burnham: "Being well aware of the judge's friendship with Mr. Burnham, Neel turned to Mr. Rowbotham in alarm: „Is that indeed Justice Kendalbushe? Is he not closely tied with Mr. Burnham?" (Ghosh, 2009: 231) Neel knew how helpless he was when he was being arrested that he easily let go of the thought of escape. When the police come to arrest him he feels like escaping but soon the reality of British oppression and power hits him. "For a wild instant, the idea of escape lodged in Neel's mind – but only to vanish, as he recalled the map that hung in his daftar and the red stain of Empire that had spread so quickly across it. Where would I hide? He said. The piyadas of Raskhali can't fight the battalions of the East India

Company. No, there's nothing to be done" (Ghosh, 2009: 183). Neel brilliantly and ironically summarizes the systems of tyranny and oppression in these words:

For if his presence in the dock proved anything at all, it was surely opposite of the principle of equality so forcefully enunciated by the judge? In the course of his trial it had become almost laughably obvious to Neel that in this system of Justice it was the English themselves – Mr. Burnham and his ilk – who were exempt from the law as it applied to others: it was they who had become the world's new Brahmins (Ghosh, 2009: 251).

Even before the trial, Neel's lawyer was conscious of what the verdict might be and what to expect from the colonists. He already warned Neel about it: "let me tell you, dear Raja," he said bluntly. „There's no jury on earth that would acquit you – far less one that consists mainly of English traders and colonists"" (Ghosh, 2009: 211).

British colonists destroyed the system, inflicted poverty and looted the properties of natives. If that wasn't enough, they imposed their own laws in Indian courts which were different for Indian people and colonizers. They would get away with massive crimes against humanity and a native would be punished for a crime that he didn't even commit: "Lest you be unaware of the seriousness of your offence, let me explain that under English law your offence is a crime of the utmost gravity and was recently considered a capital crime" (Ghosh, 2009: 247). In the verdict of the trial of Raja Neel Rattan Halder, Ghosh employs satire. He indirectly criticizes Britain for the injustices that they have done in their colonies: "But we see no merit whatsoever in the contention that men of higher caste should suffer a less severe punishment than any other person; such a principle has never been recognized nor ever will be recognized in English law, the every foundation of which lies in the belief that all are equal who appear before it..." (Ghosh, 2009: 251).

Britain always treated the people of their colonies as inferiors and uncivilized people. While making them believe in this illusion that English's were superior and civilized and it was their duty to civilize others, they enslaved one of the richest countries of the world with a glorious past and a rich culture which had no match around the world: "In pronouncing your sentence I have a stark choice: I can choose either to let the law take its course without partiality, or I can choose to establish, as a legal principle, that there exists in India a set of persons who are entitled to commit crimes without punishment." And so there does, thought Neel, and you're one of them and I am not" (Ghosh, 2009: 251).

Ghosh compares British colonizers with Pharaohs or Mongols who killed people for their own benefits without faking it as an advantage for people or pretending themselves as heroes who want others to benefit from their heroic virtues as well. The only difference between both is the deception British colonizers did to conceal their mischiefs and pretend them as honorable acts: "The truth is, sir that men do what their power permits them to do. We are no different from the Pharaohs or the Mongols: the difference is only that when we kill people we feel compelled to pretend that it is for some higher cause. It is this pretense of virtue, I promise you will never be forgiven by history" (Ghosh, 2009: 275).

Richard Slotkin's argument that a novel can be as reliable as history in recounting of what, how and when something happened applies to these above- mentioned passages and

arguments. It should be based on a similar sort of research and diligent analysis of proofs. The above extracts from the novel show that this novel is as much correct in presenting the colonial oppression in India as any history book. With its minute details, characters, and dialogues, one can place oneself in that time and relate how it happened, how it affects the present reality, and what will be its consequences in the future. Readers also come to know the cultural and domestic lifestyle of the past. The social and racial divisions that vindicated in the past is evident in the text. The relationship of power structures and subalterns is apparent in the novel.

Slotkin believes that a novel creatively reclaims the undetermined things of the past, the form of the novel permits author and readers to examine the other substitute prospects for faith, deeds, and political change, unachieved by history, which happened in the past. He expressed that if historical novels are written responsibly and carefully, they can be a most beneficial and powerful tool of popular awareness of the past, or at least it can pave a way to engage more people in the study of history known as historiography. The reality that novel searches for is artistic and symbolic, unlike historiography which gives an extremely dry and dull account of the past which is also in form of a story. The difference and edge of the fictional writing of history lie in the ways it uses proofs and represents the epilogue. He further explains that a historical novel has to incorporate in it the procedure of constructing knowledge into its portrayal, depicting the life of characters as an individual encounter whole_essentially drawing attention to the efforts and consequences which look most important simultaneously. The passages that are quoted above are a true depiction of the life of characters and their experiences as subjective whole encounters and simultaneously present the significant events in the novel which makes the novel a historical one according to Slotkin's theory.

Conclusion

The evidence presented has shown that one must keep a track of one's history and the importance of consciousness of history. Since historical writing is a narrative and an account of the past itself but in a dry way, historical fiction makes history reading engrossing and interesting. It stimulates ones interest in history. From the above analysis, it is clear that when history is described in fiction, it gives so much room to readers to interpret it easily. This research is relevant and much needed because it addresses one of the main concerns of the literary world and plays a part in the worldwide debate on historiography and historical fiction. While this research has tried to address the concerns of historians and the importance of historical fiction, there are still few questions for the future researches i.e., where historiography stands out if historical fiction is more understandable, what will historians do, if fictional writers are going to do what historians are supposed to do, will they change the way they present the history, and do they have any way to make historiography engaging like historical fiction?

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